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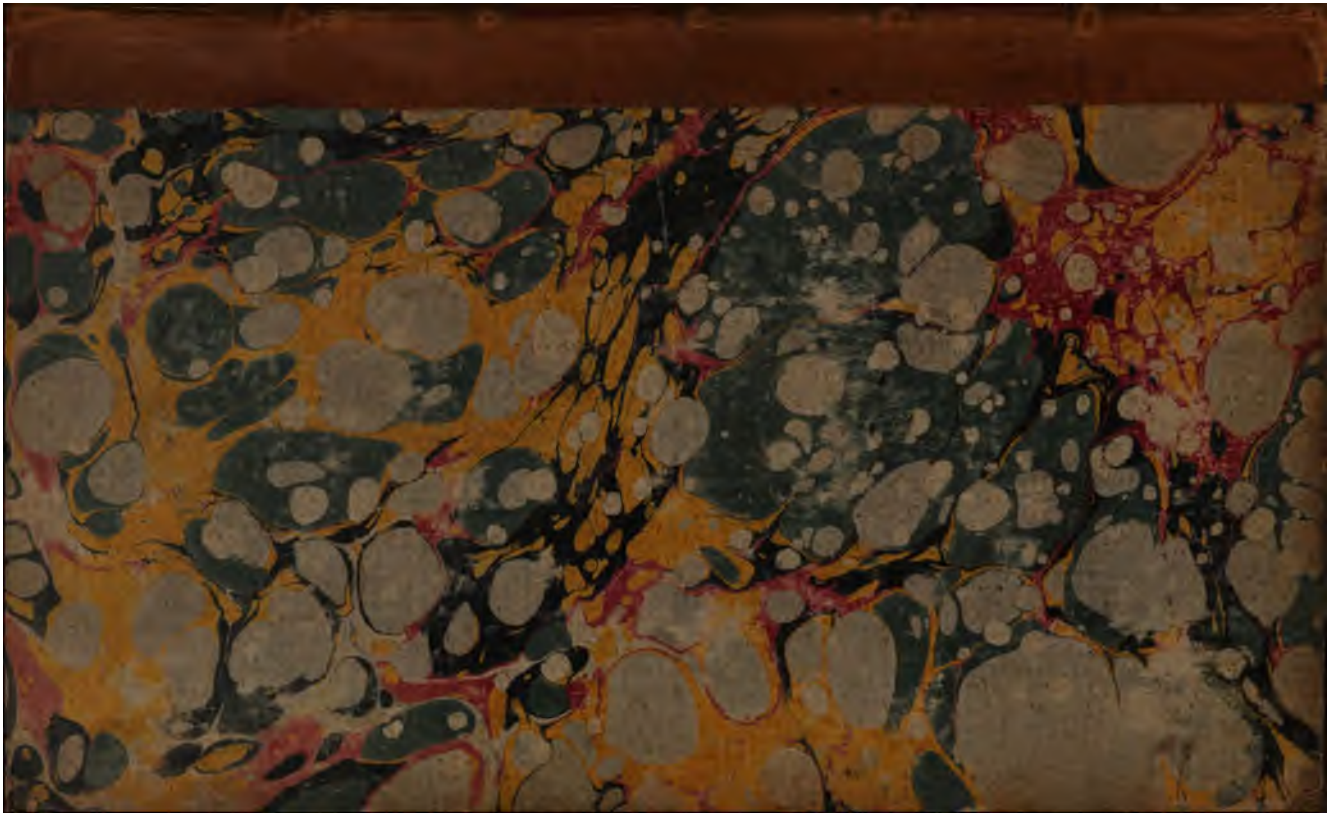

James Russell Esq.

THE

MISTAKES OF THE HEART:

OR

MEMOIRS

OF

LADY CAROLINA PELHAM

AND

LADY VICTORIA NEVIL.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

PUBLISHED BY

M. TREYSSAC DE VERGY,
Counſellor in the Parliaments of Paris and Bourdeaux.

At feeling hearts I fling, nor ever miſs the game.

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MEMOIRS, &c.

LETTER I.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

THE more I conſider, Frederick, the leſs diſtinctly do I perceive what is right or wrong. My head is the ſeat of perplexity and confuſion — a throng of thoughts ruſh into it at once—as quickly vaniſh, and leave not the ſmalleſt trace behind.

A miniſter is not more dreadfully diſtracted when the abettors of his deſpotiſm, obeying the voice of ſelf-preſervation, give him up, on a ſudden, to the revenge of an injured people.—Though

different the objects, our anxiety is the ſame: my concern for the happineſs of Lady Victoria yields not to his thirſt after riches and command.—Shall I tell her of Froſby's guilt, that, by a timely contempt of the man, ſhe may avoid the impending diſgrace?—Will not the news be death to her?—I cannot think of it without horror.

If I ſpeak, will ſhe not queſtion my veracity, or miſtake my pity for inſult?—Will ſhe not, in the exceſs of her grief, charge me with being the vile contriver?—My honour to be ſuſpected!—rather ———What ſhall I do, Frederick, what ſhall I do?

Were I indifferent, how would I fly to undeceive Victoria!—Friendſhip would claim

claim her ear — ſhe would liſten — and though her ſoul ſhould be wrapt up in ſorrow, dead to comfort, her blood would naturally riſe, and ſparkle hatred and diſdain upon the perfidious Froſby.

Why did not Mrs. Brenton find the curſed letter!—What an overſight in the favour Fortune intended for Lady Victoria!—Unfortunate girl! ſhall I doom thee to miſery?—Since this muſt be thy lot, why ſhould I anticipate it?—No: I will leave thee in thy ignorance—I will not draw aſide the veil which lies between thee and the fatal truth.—Let others ſtrike the deadly blow;— from me thou ſhalt not have cauſe for one tear, a pretext for one ſigh.

Nine o'Clock.

I thought, Frederick, that deceit and villany had their ſole abode in courts — that courts alone could produce ſhameleſs offenders, and daring impoſtors — that every where elſe vice was reſtrained by fear—ſilenced by humanity—or conquered by religion.—I ſee that ſelf-love reigns in every place—dictates to every heart—juſtifies every action — blunts the ſtings of conſcience, and the yet ſtronger impulſes of honour.—All men are alike—different only is the ſtage on which they act.—No dread of puniſhment, no hope of reward, will enable a ſoul to ſacrifice its native longings after pleaſure—'tis an evil beyond remedy. —— An evil! —— let me not revile Nature by queſtioning her wiſdom, and accuſing her of error.

Frederick! I will not have the preſumption to judge Froſby—ſtill leſs to condemn him.—He may have been placed in ſuch a circumſtance — ſeen ſuch an attitude—cauſed ſuch a bluſh—felt ſuch an emotion——Thou knoweſt not the inchanting confuſion of a ſurprize:—this alone might intoxicate his ſenſes—compel him to infidelity.——Who gazes on beauty, and is not loſt? Who welcomes not the ſupreme delight, and yields not to nature?

Why do we not always eſteem thoſe whoſe errors we juſtify and forgive? Cannot ſentiment be as unbiaſſed as reaſon? Whence do I deſpiſe a man whom I may envy, nay ſurpaſs in guilt?—— He is loved!——This, Frederick, changes the amiable tranſgreſſion into an odious one. ——How could Froſby laviſh on Emily

Cranmer an incenſe he had devoted to Victoria——laviſh the ſacred expreſſions of love, and impoſe on his heart to gratify his ſenſes?

A ſudden, an involuntary deviation from conſtancy, I excuſe; but ſeduction proves an equal want of love and honour. Is not the repetition of a fault a certainty we freely indulge it? Can our paſſion be ſincere when we wiſh for raptures in the arms of another?—No, Frederick, that deſire is mere libertiniſm.—But when we are loved—loved by a Victoria, how criminal the man who will delight in kiſſes not raviſhed from her lips!———

Events I am not yet acquainted with, which poſſibly may clear Froſby, forbid me to determine againſt him.——May he be innocent!—Oh, Victoria! for thy ſake

may

may he be innocent!——Let him be ever ſo guilty, I will not be his accuſer.—— Thou that lieſt in my ſight to tempt me to baſeneſs, letter of Emily Cranmer, away!——Froſby ſhall have it again!—— What a ſacrifice!—the only proof——No matter—'Tis ſent, Frederick. My virtue is ſafe.

Modiſh-hall,—176—

LETTER II.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

AND ſo, Carolina, in diſobedience to my commands, you have preſumed to write that "Sir John is the man I love."—You have diſcovered from my laſt, that my heart no longer beats for Froſby.—I admire thee!—Thou art certainly a non-ſuch for diſcernment!——Pray, how long wert thou in ſettling that point?———

"Only 'till I had done with thy letter, Victoria."

So long?———

"Why,

" Why, I had not glanced over the firſt page, when I ſaid, thou loveſt Sir John."

So ſoon, Carolina?——

" Sooner ſtill;—even before I had broke the ſeal."

You was poſitively determined then to believe in your own conceit?——

" Not ſo neither, Victoria.——From that " ſilk the ſmile of Sir John pointed to " thee" I formed my judgment. I had no need, I aſſure thee, of thy " how hand- " ſome he looks!"

Poor Lord Pelerſton! I pity him.——

" Why pity him, Victoria?"

Thou may'ſt as well conſtrue his delicacy into jealouſy, as my eſteem for Sir John into love.——If ſo—poor Lord Pelerſton I ſay!——Thou delighteſt ſurely in being wrong, Carolina, ſo ready art thou to miſtake. — Thou waſt born to blunder.——I love Sir John! ha! ha! ha!——

"Thou doſt, Victoria."

I do! I'll convince thee I do not.

Though Lady Belmour be all beauty, all ſoftneſs, all temptation, mark this, Carolina, I am not jealous. I ſleep well, eat hearty, have no oppreſſion at heart, no diſlike to the preſence of Frofby, breathe no impertinent ſighs, and can anſwer a "Yes" or a "No" to the purpoſe.—

Now

Now art thou convinced I love not Sir John?——

"Thou doſt, Victoria."

Still incredulous!——Proud girl!——

Brenton-hall——176——

LET-

LETTER III.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

HERE is a new ſcene for thee, Victoria.——Learn from me how to humble haughty man, and behold him, with diſdain, creeping at thy feet.

From a review of his follies, I had worked myſelf into a momentary indifference for Lord Pelerſton, when, led by his evil genius, he choſe that very minute to viſit me.

The wretch had on his brow the anxiety of a miſer; his eyes, at one glance, ſurveyed

veyed every corner of my cloſet in queſt of a rival, and his tongue half with, half without motion, liſped "How do you do, Madam?"

'Tis amazing that people of ſo brilliant a fancy as your Lordſhip have not yet done with that old way of opening a converſation. Why don't you leave the "how do you" to a doctor? The ſound of theſe words is enough to give one the vapours for a whole day;——it forces an apprehenſion one is not well.——But, my Lord, what are you ſo intent upon?——

No-thing—nothing.—— How do you, Carolina?——

And his eyes devoured a paper which lay on the table.

That letter—(he kiſſed my hand)——
Whoſe is it?——

Lord Fanfly's.——

Lord Fanfly's!—Does he correſpond with you?——He—he once loved you.—Oh, Carolina!—a letter from him?——

Why not, my Lord?——

Why not!—Death!—The queſtion is murder.—And he loves you ſtill?——

He does, Sir.——

And you are pleaſed he does?——

I am.——

Right woman!

And

And he put on all the features of ſpite.

Not one in a thouſand will ſay No, tho' they hate the coxcomb, when a Yes will plague or mortify a lover.—You love Lord Fanfly, very likely!———

Very likely I do.———

Right again, on my honour!—Well, I don't believe it.———

The reaſon, pray?———

You—you have liſtened to me.———

Ha! ha! ha!—have you no better authority?——

Indeed — I ever feared it was a poor one.———

You

You grow rude, my Lord.——

Then you love me.——Sweet reproof!——You love me—that's certain.——

9 o'Clock.

Evident was the conſequence. My indiſcretion put me ſo abſolutely off my guard, that had he ſkilfully turned my confuſion to his advantage, I really think I had not made him wait long for the "I love you." His impertinent attention to Lord Fanſly's letter, not only gave me time to recover, but even power to laugh at him.—The fool, ſaid I to myſelf, how could he ſlip the opportunity!

Is it not very hot, my Lord?——

And

And I moved on my tip-toe to the window.

Very hot, my Lady.——

And he walked to the table.

Sir?——

Madam?——

Not a ſtep further, I beg.——

And I drew up the window for air.

Lord Pelerſton continued with his eyes fixed on the letter, uncertain what to do. My boſom heaved—I ſat down.

Shall I preſume to aſk your Lordſhip, whether you intend to honour me with your converſation?——

Honour you! — How you talk, my Lady!——To converſe with you is the higheſt ſatisfaction—but for it I ſhould be miſerable.———

And he made two ſteps towards me.

Will it rain to-day, my Lord?——

Yes—I think not—it may happen.——

Yes—I think not—it may happen.—— You are immenſely witty this morning.——

Confuſion t

Confuſion! — Bantered when my heart is ready to break with ſorrow! Is that generous?—Oh, Carolina! ———

And he laid his hand on his breaſt.

You know not what pain I have here ——how I ſuffer— —how unhappy you make me.———

I made no anſwer—got up—and took my *Mandolina.*——

Who could imagine that Lord Fanfly had been ſo baſe—ſo cowardly baſe as to love, after the repeated proofs of contempt you have heaped upon him!——From that man you condeſcend to receive a letter —to read it—to be pleaſed with it!—— You almoſt declare you love him!—Ah!

And

And he gnaſhed his teeth, claſped his hands together, ſhook his head, and threw himſelf on the ſopha.

How paſſion deforms, Victoria! Lord Pelerſton, whoſe ſweetneſs of features had attracted my attention——betrayed my heart into love, looked then ſo ugly, that it frightened me to the very ſoul.

That monſter my lover!

I bluſhed at the thought——I quaked——my legs almoſt ſlipped from under me——my *Mandolina* dropped from my hand——I felt a tear of indignation——leaned a minute upon the table——took up the letter——and making a curteſy as I paſſed by his Lordſhip——

Your humble ſervant, my Lord.——

Then

Then bravely forcing a ha! ha! ha! I ſtepped to the door.

Curſe on love and ſenſibility!——

Amen, Sir, if they have no other attendants but vexation and folly.——

Is it Caroline who thus miſtakes the character of love for folly?——who thus upbraids me with vexing her?——You hate me.——Your hatred is ever the interpreter of my actions.——How ſhould I not perpetually be wrong!——Oh, Caroline!——

He ſighed, and reclined his head on the arm of the ſopha.

You have put me, my Lord, out of conceit with lovers.----I will diſcard them all.——

Will you really?---- Enchanting reſolution!——How you delight my heart! —— Speak the words again ——they are life!——Carolina, will you really?——

And three leaps of joy brought him at my feet.

To ſhew you, my Lord, I am determined---I begin with your Lordſhip.——

How he looked, Victoria!

None have given me ſuch a ſurfeit of love——you have excelled in the art of making it odious---I loathe its very name.

Not

Not unlike the wretch hearing the fatal decree which condemns him to inſtant death, Lord Pelerſton remained motionleſs on his knee——his lips half diſcloſed to let out a complaint, or a ſigh——his eyes down in all the ſadneſs of deſpair.

I had the heart, Victoria, to enjoy his ſorrow——to triumph in his confuſion ——to dart upon him a glance of contempt.——I even felt a ſpark of hatred ſtrike my heart——call my ſoul up.—— I turned from him, and opening the door——

Well may you ſtare, my Lord, at what I have ſaid.——Little did you dream of my juſt diſpleaſure.——You have heard me.——Never will I receive the homage of a man who breathes but to diſpleaſe—— who loves but to offend.——When you

have learned to eſteem me, I may poſſibly learn to forgive you.——

And I ſhut the door after me.

Lord Fanſly to be the cauſe of a rupture between Lord Pelerſton and me!—— From what an inſignificant ſpring!——No matter——'tis abſolutely a rupture for ——.Another ſuch ſcene, Victoria, and adieu to love!

London—176—

LET-

LETTER IV.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

WHO would not laugh at the ridiculous caſualties proceeding from love, gallantry, and the whole train of paſſions? They are ſuch, Frederick, that a man of ſenſe, in his ſober hours, cannot have the leaſt idea of them.

We know not the twentieth part of the follies we may ſucceſſively be entertained or vexed with.—What a diverſity!—how extenſive the circle in which they are contained!—One whim produces a thouſand. —None but a NEWTON in morals could aſcribe to our thoughts their juſt limits, and diſcover their flow, ebb and attraction.

They come ſeparate, or in crouds, to haſten or retard the tide of deſire :—ſubject to no rule, impatient of command, they daringly intrude, and as confidently ſway.

Surely, Frederick, the organs of a rational being have no conformity with thoſe of a ſenſeleſs ſage who will tell us in a lofty diſcourſe, we muſt, on his word, believe Nature the ſlave of the Will, though ſhe ſupremely diſpoſes of our ſenſes.——Is not the ſubjecting the creator to the created a mighty judicious proof of our power of acting and thinking? How ſtrange and inconſiſtent ſuch language!——how ſtill more impertinent our credulity!

Could I lord it over my thoughts, would I not immediately remove the intolerable ſcruple which preys upon my mind?

mind? Would I hesitate to fly to the arms of Lady Belmour?—Would I stop on the very verge of pleasure, and balk my fancy of a rapturous and certain enjoyment.

How came I, all of a sudden, to grow conscientious? Is not that delicacy very unreasonable, Frederick, since it is at enmity with prudence, which bids me renounce the odious guest? Had I myself only to upbraid for the folly, would not you think me a notorious offender against reason and self-interest? Who would pity me for sufferings I chose to be loaded with?

I have not been guilty, Frederick, of so inconsiderate a blunder.—The sentiment, unfelt, entered my heart with the idea of Lady Victoria, and imperceptibly

tibly united itſelf ſo cloſely with my paſſion for her, that to this minute it has braved my utmoſt endeavours, and inſolently kept inſeparable from it.

Had I any hopes of pleaſing, my delicacy might be overlooked, and appear leſs abſurd; but I have none, and can yet ſacrifice a preſent joy to the chimerical honour of being conſtant and virtuous to no purpoſe!—How ridiculous!

Had I out-lived the ſeaſon of feeling, a remorſe or two might be convenient to enliven the dying ſpirits.—Beſides, fooliſhneſs as well as wiſdom ought to have its day.—I would not grudge it:—but at my age!—As nothing is of continuance, and we muſt for a time be the ſport of the reigning caprice, I will patiently wait till the fit is over.—Scruple! On my word, Frede-

rick,

rick, I never dreamt I could welcome the hateful ſenſation. How I came by the word is no leſs aſtoniſhing—it was not in the Courtier's Dictionary I am ſure.—I never heard it at a rout—never thought it could exiſt where ſo much evil is daily committed. —O, Victoria! thy eyes have taught me what is not in the power of lawyers to feel, or biſhops to demonſtrate.

Mediſh-hall,—176—

LETTER V.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

IT would ſeem, dear Carolina, that they have all united to torment me——yes, all; I except none, not even Mrs. Brenton.

The methods they have taken are ſtill more unſufferable than the vexation itſelf.

Froſby beſets me with an encreaſe of love, flattery and attention.

Mrs. Brenton with an inquiſitive eye, and unrelenting curioſity.

Sir

Sir John with ſo unaffected a gaiety, ſo natural an indifference, as if his heart was abſolutely free.

I have no ears for Froſby——no tongue for Mrs. Brenton——no patience for Sir John——I am diſpleaſed at them all.

I have juſt told Sophy I am not well, and chooſe to be alone.——I don't like the looks of Sophy ——they betray a ſuſpicion ——dart a deſire to ſearch into my heart—follow my ſteps—watch my motions.—She had the indiſcretion this morning, to venture a fear I was not happy, as I had, laſt night, breathed many a ſigh—ſpoke broken words.—— Now has ſhe alarmed Mrs. Brenton — they come—here they are——fooliſh Sophy !——

Eleven

Eleven o'Clock.

What ails thee, Victoria? ——Sophy has frightened me—thou art not ſick, I hope.———

Never was I better, Madam.———

Why then doſt thou deſire to be alone? —Seldom is ſolitude a friend, Victoria.—Will not my company be more acceptable?———

It will, dear Aunt.———

Sophy was ordered out, and Mrs. Brenton taking me in her arms———

Thy heart, Victoria, indulges itſelf too often on thy features; its ſecrets are written in thy eyes; they pierce through the veil of thy modeſty, through the diſcretion of

of thy words, through thy moſt inſignificant ſmiles :— I have even ſeen them play in the very looks thou aſſumedſt to hide them.—Thou loveſt, Victoria—that is the cauſe of thy anxiety. Is it not ?——

It is—and I ſighed.

Sir John may make thee happy, Victoria : —but are not thy hopes of being ſo better founded on the temper and virtues of Froſby ? —Shall a ſlight acquaintance of a few months prevail over ſo many years of mutual friendſhip, confidence and love ?———

I think it will.———

Remember Froſby loves thee—remember thou haſt tacitly entered into an engagement with him, by receiving his vows, and encouraging his addreſſes. ——

Shouldſt

Shouldſt thou now give way to a new flame, would not thy delicacy ſuffer? ——

It would not.—Might not I hear of love, talk of it, and ſtill be a dupe to my fancy?——

Thy change will be taken for levity.—

If I loved not, where is the levity?—

My all, Victoria, would I ſacrifice to free thee from the leaſt uneaſineſs.—From my tenderneſs expect an implicit compliance with thy deſires—that thou may'ſt always command:—whether thou determineſt for Sir John Modiſh or Froſby, my conſent is thine.—But, dear Victoria, remember Froſby loves thee—remember he had the ſanction of thy parents—of thy aunt—of thyſelf.—Reflect on his merit—conſider what the world will ſay—though thy

thy heart ſhould be blameleſs—though nothing could be objected to thy choice of Sir John, ſlander, envy and malice may raiſe their voice, and bitterly exclaim againſt thee.———

If you love and eſteem your niece, 'tis enough.———

Sir John has many enemies ——Froſby has none. —— Sir John knows not of thy inclination for him —— by ſtill doubting it, he even ſeems averſe to know it. — He never openly either talked or acted as a lover.——Did he privately?———

No.———

Art thou not afraid then, Victoria, to yield to a paſſion which thou art not certain of having inſpired?———

Is it my aunt—my dear aunt, I hear?—

And tears forced their way down my cheek.

What have I ſaid that can vex my Victoria?——Have I not left thee at full liberty?———

At full liberty when you ſo ſtrongly declare for Froſby, and expatiate on my indiſcretion; when you draw ſo frightful a picture of dangers I dreaded not, as the natural conſequence of what you term "my levity;—at full liberty!—By ſaying "Sir John has many enemies, and Froſby none" don't you point out the man you have fixed on for your Victoria?—Am I at full liberty when you prefer Froſby?———

When

When Frosby and I exchanged assurances of eternal love, did not we silently agree that that eternity should last no longer than our illusion?—Did we mutually promise we should never meet, he with a handsomer woman, I with a more amiable man?—How could we then engage for what neither of us foresaw?—Had it been in our power, should I now be in need of an apology?— which is most justly to be reproached with infidelity?—he for having ceased to please—or I, for having ceased to love?———

Hast thou so strictly enquired into thy heart, Victoria, as to be perfectly convinced of the change?———

I have been so often surprised into different emotions —— been by turns such a slave of every one, that I am not yet able to know which has the greatest effect

fect on my ſenſibility.—But, dear Aunt, my irreſolution is againſt Froſby. —Since I heſitate, I love him not.———

What quality in Sir John ———

None —— all together have favoured him.———

Is Froſby inferior to Sir John in birth, riches, wit or merit?——Are not his excellent parts ſufficiently heightened by the beauty of his perſon?———

If impartiality could point out a ſenſible difference between them, would you expect leſs equity from friendſhip ———

Or love, Victoria?———

Or love, dear Aunt? What accompliſhments have not both nature and education beſtowed on Sir John!——Like ſo many darts they ſtrike to the very heart, and

and leave no other ſenſation but that of the wound they give.———

What canſt thou promiſe thyſelf from a paſſion he is a ſtranger to?———

He is not: — he loves.—To his generoſity aſcribe his ſilence.——He thinks I love—ever will love, Froſby.——Reſpect ties his tongue.——Oh! how he would talk had he your ſagacity and could read as well!———

How little does Froſby ſuſpect thy inconſtancy!——ſo long an inclination!——ſo ſudden an indifference!———

It was a miſtake of my heart, a deceit of my imagination. Carolina, who ever thought it would at laſt prove ſo, often inveighed againſt my ſupinity, and adviſed me to liſten to reaſon.——I never did——nor would.——nor believed it poſſible till

Sir

Sir John forced me to reflect — then Froſby———

Loſt all the intereſt he had got in thy heart.———

I fear he did.——

Thou feareſt he did?———

I do.——Is there a greater torment than to be indifferent to the object we love?———

How excellent my Victoria, would her pity guard her againſt a new paſſion, and engage her to make Froſby happy!—

I ſhook my head.

Would it were poſſible, dear Madam!———

It is——thy virtue proves it——doubt not thy power, Victoria.———

My

My heart tells me I have it not.———

But one attempt—and thy heart will tell thee thou haſt it.———

It throbs with too much pleaſure at the thought of Sir John.—You ſee I am unable to conceal its emotion. —A new life is ſprung up in me.—'Tis not Froſby who gave it.———

Wouldſt thou liſten to thy generoſity, give way to the benevolence of thy ſoul—I know that Froſby's miſery ſhall be agony to thee—thou never couldſt look on a wretch without partaking of his ſorrow. —Oh, Victoria!———

I will endeavour to command my ſentiments.——Expect me not to ſucceed, or even to entertain long a deſire to conquer. —Nature cannot be kept under.——I will avoid the ſight of Sir John—will ſee but Froſby.

Froſby.——Say but you are happy, and I ſhall not repine at being made miſerable.———

Mrs. Brenton walked, ſeemingly diſturbed, and twice exclaimed "Poor Froſby!"—A tear ran down her cheek.—I was moved.

Diſpoſe of your niece, dear Madam: my gratitude aſſures you of my obedience.———

No, Victoria.———

And ſhe preſſed me to her boſom.

Though I ſhould be happy to ſee thee feel agreeable to my wiſhes, I will not force them upon thee. My eſteem for Froſby ſhall ever yield to my tenderneſs for thee.——I will forget, if poſſible, that he loves thee

thee, that he was favoured with thy affections—favoured with my intereſt—that he never gave thee a reaſon for thy change.——Thou knoweſt my late ſuſpicions of him were groundleſs; ſpite of all my enquiry no diſcovery has been made. ——Poor Froſby! What will he not ſuffer for the loſs of thee!—My heart bleeds for him—ſo does thine, Victoria——that tear betrays thee—hide it not, 'tis a praiſe to thy virtue—an honour to thy ſenſibility.———

I will ſay with you "poor Froſby!"—But what is pity to a man we cannot love?———

It ſoftens the cruelty of his ſituation.—Undeceive not Froſby—let him ſtill continue in his illuſion.——Thy concern will look like tenderneſs, let him be happy as

long

long as poſſible.—Grow cold by degrees: thy indifference, well managed, may poſſibly have no effect upon him.——His attachment deſerves this from thee.—Tell me not that honour bids thee avoid his declarations——true honour is to be juſt and humane.———

I know no arts: he will immediately gueſs me.—You taught me to be true—to ſhudder at a lie.——My confuſion will ſpeak——he will feel I think not what I ſay.———

Froſby will ſee no art in thee.——If he does, he loves thee not.—That art, if it ſhould be diſcovered, will turn to thy glory:—'tis a virtue when practiſed to do good.———

A chariot entering the court-yard, Mrs. Brenton ſtepped to the window.

'Tis

'Tis Sir John, Victoria.——

And ſhe obſerved my countenance. I ſmiled.

Now for thy heart.——

And ſhe laid her hand upon it.

How it beats!——The emotion is too pleaſing to deprive thee of it.——

And ſhe hugged me in her arms.

But, Victoria, you will not ſee Sir John.——Did not you ſay you would ſee nobody?——

I did not think he would come.——

And I kiſſed her hand.

How ingenuous!—I believe thee.——

She gently patted me on the ſhoulder, and went to receive Sir John.

The

The converſation with my aunt having thrown my ſpirits into a flutter, I remained in my cloſet to compoſe myſelf.——The ſight of the letter I had begun tempted me. I ſat down---wrote—now and then ſtopped to remember Sir John was below —roſe up—took the pen again—told thee all—but Sir John—I muſt to him.—— Had he longed to ſee me he had been up before now—not a word of impatience has been ſent to me—oh! that's bad, very bad.—More company!—I am glad of it; it will help me out of myſelf.—Whom is it I hear tripping about in the next room?— Huſh!—he talks to Sophy.—— 'Tis Sir John's voice—no, 'tis Froſby's.—I'll ſlide through the back-ſtairs.

1 o'Clock.

I will not caſt back one thought on Sir John Modiſh.—All the ſenſibilities of that man

man keep unmoved at my ſight;——not one ſpark of unuſual joy appears in his eyes;——he makes a bow with his head half turned to another lady, and hardly, after five minutes, diſtinguiſhes me in the circle.——Then he deigns to nod over his ſhoulder, as great men do to thoſe they protect, or want to deceive.——"I ſee you," is the expreſſion of that nod.——Impertinent!——Don't I deſerve, Carolina, more than one diſtant "I ſee you?"——One ſigh——and I'll to the company again.

Twelve minutes paſt One.

In entering the room I made a falſe ſtep, and ſprained my ancle——I ſhrieked——then, indeed, Sir John flew to me.——How I liked his looks!---how full of tenderneſs and anxiety!---Had it not been for the pain, which deſtroyed the illuſion,

I ſhould have thought it was himſelf who ſuffered.---Alas! exclaimed I --- I wanted the "alas" to excuſe a bluſh.

Sir John, too much affected to talk, contented himſelf to look, and tender me his arm. --- Could he poſſibly be more eloquent?---He ſupported me, and with two more "Alaſes!" I limped to a chair.

My aunt, Frofby, all were inſtantly on the wing to relieve me. ---The ſilent, but ſentimental Sir John dared to lay a finger on my ancle.

Ay, there it pains, ſaid I, turning my eye from the new-faſhioned doctor.

Is there any ſwelling, Sir John, aſked Miſs Elliſon?

I hope not, Miſs.——

I'll tell you that immediately, ſaid Froſby, kneeling, and advancing his hand with the ſolemnity of a quack.

Touch it not, Sir, you will ſmart it.——

And I drew my foot under the chair.

Ladies, I am much better --- at firſt the pain was intolerable: it is ſubſided.---Pray ſit down.——

Sir John, truſting to this, ſhook off the concern he had betrayed, reſumed his coldneſs, and went to Miſs Elliſon.---I had a mind to ſhriek again.

Knowing that he alone had Hungary water, I aſked for ſome.---How exquiſite his organs! how rapid his motions! His

bottle was in my hand before I had half uttered my want of it.

I ſmelt the water—bathed my temples with it——ſaid it did me good——gave the bottle back——ſmiled my thanks. ——He prattles ſo agreeably with every body, why, with me, has he no tongue? ---He was going from me———

Sir, will you ſpare me a few drops?——

And I looked for my hankerchief.

'Tis at your command, Madam.——

Nobody has his accent, Carolina. 'Tis ſo ſoft, ſo tender, ſo expreſſive, even when indifferent.——Would he talk of love——my harp would have no ſtring I could tune to it.——

I unfolded the handkerchief.

Shall

Shall I——

And he held the bottle over it.

If you pleaſe, Sir.——

His hand was unſteady——he looked at me ——then poured ſome drops——then looking at me again, miſſed my handkerchief, and ſpilt it on my ruffles.

Sir John!——

He half bluſhed, half ſmiled, half opened his lips——the bottle ſlid from his fingers ——down upon me ran the Hungary water.

I inſtantly ſhook my apron at him---not angrily, believe me.

Now, Sir, we are even, ſince I have given you a ſhare in the jeſt you intended upon me.——

I intended none.——

I knew it as well as he, Carolina. However, as no feature contradicted what he ſaid———

Then, Sir, I am ſorry———

And taking the dry part of my apron, I offered to wipe the wet part of his coat.

I owe you this ſatisfaction, Sir John, I give it with pleaſure.———

He ſtammered "Madam"——held my arm, apologiſed for his blunder, and bowing reſpectfully, ſtepped back to his ſeat.———

If Sir John had not been obſerved, Carolina, he would not have ſtammered "Madam," but ſpoke out what my heart had welcomed.——I could not miſtake his countenance——there the compliment he would have paid me was written

written: I eaſily read every word.—That language is not to be uttered, 'tis certainly peculiar to lovers.

Mrs. Brenton whiſpering that ſo much perfume would infallibly give me a head-ache, I retired to put on another dreſs, and tell thee of Sir John.——The clock ſtrikes three——I hear Sophy —— they wait for me.———Adieu.

Brenton Hall, 176——

LETTER VI.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

ARE you in earneſt, Frederick, when you believe that "Miſs Cranmer muſt have monopoliſed every charm, ſince ſhe has robbed Lady Victoria of Froſby's heart?" Can any conſequence be drawn from the moſt blind and fantaſtic of paſſions? Does ſenſibility reaſon with the powers by which it is ſwayed, and coldly turn the ſcale to the ſide of merit or beauty? Love thinks not of the advantages he may either loſe or gain: his organiſation differing totally from that of indifference, he judges not agreeable to thy principles: he dreams of no virtues,

tues, wiſhes for no pleaſures, but thoſe which his favourite object poſſeſſes or inſpires.

Inſtead of *Love*, read *Imagination* — I know no difference between them.

After the numberleſs inſtances the world you live in daily affords you, 'tis amazing you ſhould entertain ſo chimerical a notion. Don't you ſee men of every rank forſake the lovely partners of their bed for women ſo void of honour and delicacy that I would bluſh to throw one look or compliment upon them?

Miſs Cranmer, Frederick, may talk as ſhe feels —— poſſeſs ſuch features as would have called for the whole genius of an Appelles, yet not, like Lady Vic-

toria, delight the heart, and raviſh the imagination.

Lady Victoria is the darling of Nature—a peculiar inſtance of the utmoſt ſtretch of her creating power. When you gaze upon her —— when you liſten to her voice — 'tis not your eyes — 'tis not your ears that are ſtruck with the lovely features, the muſical expreſſion, but your ſoul which, inſinuating itſelf into every fibre of theſe organs, looks, hears, enjoys the ſupreme extaſy.

Miſs Cranmer may ſurpriſe, throw the ſenſes into a fever of burning deſires, but will her taſte and underſtanding equally pleaſe and enchant? In our paſſion for Victoria, Frederick, love and judgment

aſſiſt

aſſiſt one another, and would even outlive her beauty.

Nine o'Clock.

Duval, expert as he is at diſcoveries, has not yet been able to have more than one glance of Miſs Cranmer, and to give me juſt now the following information.

Miſs Cranmer is a young lady of great fortune, who, by the untimely death of her parents, falling under the guardianſhip of an uncle, a devotee to the Romiſh religion, was ſent over to France to be brought up in a nunnery, whence ſhe came back a twelvemonth ago on the news of her uncle being ſuddenly attacked with the palſy.

Mr.

Mr. Cranmer is ſtill indiſpoſed.

Emily keeps him conſtant company ——ſeldom goes out——receives a few friends, amongſt whom are Mr. Froſby and Miſs Elliſon.

Miſs Cranmer is finely made, of exquiſite beauty, extremely good natured, tender, compaſſionate.—She employs two thirds of her income in acts of generoſity and beneficence. — Never was want unſatisfied at her gate.

Reading is her favourite amuſement.—Now and then ſhe argues with the vicar of the pariſh, and when he is likely to turn victor in reaſoning, which, however, is very ſeldom the caſe, ſhe ſilences him with a *bon mot*, and with a ſmile, preſently,

ſently transforms his learning into non ſenſe.

This, Frederick, is a ſlight ſketch of the character of Miſs Cranmer.

Duval, who knowing not why I ſent him for that intelligence, imagines a ſudden inclination may be the cauſe of it, was profuſe in his praiſes of the young lady. He was very nigh making an odious compariſon, when I interpoſed by "'tis enough ——be gone."

Here he is——A letter!

The bearer rode away as ſoon as he had delivered it.

Some myſtery I warrant ye, Frederick ——let me ſee.

To

To Sir John Modiſh.

" Is ſorrow ſo entertaining, or the indifference of Lady Victoria ſo grateful, that no woman can divert Sir John from the firſt, or remove the latter from his heart?——Will nothing revive his taſte for pleaſure, and ſnatch his languid ſoul from its mortal lethargy?

You pleaſe not, Sir John, and can tamely bear with contempt, tamely cringe at the feet of an imperious beauty!——Shall Froſby be elated at your diſgrace?—Muſt you add to his glory, by ſtill wearing the fetters his Victoria chained you with! How welcome to his pride are not her averſion, and your ſucceſsleſs love?——How ridiculous you appear in his preſence!——You can tamely bear with

ſuch

ſuch indignities, and I neither abhor, nor deſpiſe you!

Alas! Sir John, why did I ſee you unhappy!——Why did I pity you!——'Till that fatal day, my life paſſed in delightful tranquillity——I never dreamt of love— my heart was free from trouble, and my eyes never ſhed a tear, but of joy and pleaſure.

We both love — By what ſtrange fate do we mutually love where we are mutually diſliked!——Victoria! Froſby! How fortunate in their paſſions!—how rapturous the hours they paſs together!——Had we ſuch hours — far from envying, how we ſhould be envied!

Often have my looks ſpoke the feelings of my ſoul — often did it fly to my lips, and yet——— Oh, Sir John! what an enemy

enemy has your prepoſſeſſion been to our peace and felicity! How many days, loſt in vexation and tears, had been enlivened by love and ſenſibility! How carefully had I cheriſhed the illuſion!

Thou haſt ſeen me---diſtinguiſhed me with thy eſteem---more than once whiſpered in my ear—and ſtill thou knoweſt not the ſoul thou haſt inflamed!---Seek for me among thoſe thou viſiteſt——among thoſe whom thou haſt praiſed, and, in an innocent frolic, ſurpriſed with a kiſs.——Which of them bluſhed at the touch of thy lips, and trembling received the ſalute?——Am I ſtill a ſtranger to thee? —— If ſo no longer, guard the ſecret from thy tongue——truſt it not to thy eye——keep it from thy whole countenance.——I would die with confuſion,

ſhouldſt

ſhouldſt thou ——— Oh, Sir John! how I love thee! ——

* * *

Who is this lady? What a ſtyle!--- What fire in her expreſſion!

" Which of them bluſhed at the touch of thy lips, and trembling received thy ſalute?"—Which of them?—I will not conſider, Frederick, leſt by the knowledge of the lady I ſhould encreaſe my miſery. by her diſappointment.---- My courage would fail me under the additional grief. ---Let me for ever be ignorant of a remedileſs evil---to know it were intolerable.

How come they all to think I love?---I never told it.-----Is it Froſby who thus

ſpreads

ſpreads my ſhame and his glory?——— Whence could he ſuſpect me for a rival?— Where? When?—Vain queſtions! Does not my heart daily betray itſelf at the ſight of Victoria — at the very ſound of her name?—How acute the eye of a lover! how quickly he judges our motions, and aſſigns their real cauſe!

Am I then a child in diſſimulation, that I am ſo eaſily unmaſked?—They pity me! Curſe on their pity!—Was it not the fear of a repulſe—my pride, not my generoſity, that kept the painful ſecret from my lips, yet am I deprived of the advantages which ought to have reſulted from my ſilence!—I lie undiſguiſed before them all—I ſuffer for having entertained a diffidence of myſelf—for not having had the baſeneſs to perplex two lovers,

lovers, and oppoſe their happineſs!——Confuſion!—I muſt either ſpeak—boldly ſpeak—delight in miſchief, or by giving my ſenſes up to lady Belmour, tear my heart from Victoria.—They pity me! Infamous, by heavens!——

Modiſh-hall,—176—.

LET-

LETTER VII.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

HAD I in my feet the velocity of a beau's tongue, ſwift as a beam of the ſun would I fly to thee every day, were it but for half an hour.—No more could friendſhip poſſibly ſteal from love and pleaſure—but in half an hour many are the ſentiments, many the words, we could feel and utter.

Let me ſee.—Three minutes to praiſes, and five to complaints of our lovers—ten to the ſecret wiſhes of our hearts — two to ſighs — four to ſlander, and ſix to dreſs. —— What other topics could we fall upon—what elſe dream of?—I'll tell thee what—it has juſt entered my head.—

Inſtead

Inſtead of the three minutes in favour of our lovers, let us employ them in a plot againſt them.———

"Againſt our lovers, Carolina?"—

Yes, againſt them. Who knows but they are all errant rogues! When love inſolently ſilences reaſon, is it not next to a miracle if we miſtake not vice for virtue, and wiſdom for folly?———

I am vexed to the ſoul, Victoria, when I think that the power of our pretty faces ſhall hardly outlive the firſt tranſports of a huſband.

I was about ſixteen, when a Chineſe Gold Pheaſant, the firſt I had ever ſeen, was preſented me. As tame in reality, as a new admirer in appearance, it became my ſole delight. So fond was I of the

the lovely creature, that I neglected dreſs, aſſemblies, and the whole train of youthful pleaſures. For a whole month it reſted on my lap, ſlept on my toilet, was fed with my own hand, and had all the compliments, careſſes and kiſſes I could procure or beſtow.—Mark the end, Victoria. I had imperceptibly overſtrained my ſenſibility.—I had gazed on every feather, admired every ſhade of the colours.—Novelty vaniſhed—I grew cold—tired——The Pheaſant was ſent to the country.—Never ſince have I wiſhed for it.—Only one month!——On my word there is no comfort in the thought.—The Pheaſant was as beautiful as ever.—All ſaid ſo.——Oh! Nature, Nature!—Does not novelty conſtitute three parts of what the world calls conſtancy?——

"I am afraid it does, Carolina."——

Why

Why then, 'tis high time to diſcard our Froſbys, Modiſhes, Pelerſtons, and form a new ſet.———

What think you of an elopement with the firſt tempting ſpark Fortune ſhall throw in our way? This, of all modern follies, I ſhould like beſt: ten to one, chance would treat us more favourably than our own judgment.

I have yet heard but of one couple that repented of a trip to Scotland, whilſt moſt of thoſe married in London wear the features of diſguſt and ſorrow.—I'll give you the reaſon. Marriage, like religion, wants free votaries.—As perſecution produces enthuſiam, love ſubſiſts through oppoſition. — You ſtart, Victoria; your heart objects to my propoſal.—Thank not thy virtue for it. Were thy relations the reverſe of what they are, ſoon would thy

thy fancy reliſh it. —— Troubles and difficulties are noble enticements to indiſcretion. —— We cannot know in a calm how we would behave in a ſtorm. I have heard a very ſenſible man proteſt, that the judge who ſentences a wretch to death, would himſelf commit the ſame crime, were he in the ſame circumſtances. If ſo, what art thou, human wiſdom?—Lord! do I not ſpeak ſenſe?—Oh, Victoria! 'tis Lord Pelerſton's fault. Chearfully would I write thee a few fond impertinences.—I am not always ambitious to think when I can feel.——Of late I am grown ſo dull—I have not, this fortnight, had one pleaſing reverie—my nights are the lively picture of the day's ſorrow.—What dreams!—I always ſee Lord Pelerſton ready to offend, and, what is ſtill worſe, Victoria, always graceful and handſome.—Deceitful hearts ſhould not be ſo agreeably

agreeably lodged.---Heigh ho! how long ſhall I refuſe his viſits? He exaſperated me ſo, when laſt I ſaw him, that he has had no opportunity ſince to ſay he repents. ---to hear I forgive.---He has written, he has looked, he has ſighed---no anſwer, no look, no ſigh has been returned. ---Were I certain he never would diſpleaſe, quickly would I love again; but what hopes, if jealouſy is part of his life? Shall a weak woman be more powerful than nature! Though beauty might lull a few ſymptoms aſleep, the diſorder would ſtill ſubſiſt.--- Jealouſy! what a poiſon art thou, that no antidote can be found againſt thee!

London—176——

* * * * * *

P. S. Beſet with ſo many dangers, I am aſtoniſhed, Victoria, at thy tranquility. What! not one fear of Lady Belmour——

Lady Belmour, the only woman I would not venture Lord Pelerſton with! I will not tell thee of the numberleſs good qualities which muſt endear her to a lover.—'Tis enough for thee to know that her reputation being unſpotted, her overthrow is the moſt diſtinguiſhed honour a man can deſire.—Sir John may be inflamed with a burning impatience to obtain that honour.——Vanity——the neceſſity of diverting thee from his thoughts—curioſity—How many enemies haſt thou to apprehend! Rely not on his love for thee, Victoria—conſider he believes thee infatuated with Froſby.——From this fooliſh credulity of his haſt thou more to fear, than from his paſſion to hope. Adieu.

LETTER VIII.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

OF all legiſlators, Frederick, none has excelled Mahomet in knowledge of the human heart, made laws more adapted to our nature, better calculated for univerſal compliance.—None—but no more of Mahomet.

No matter what name men give to our failings. The neceſſity of their exiſtence will ever baffle the attempts of thoſe who would reaſon us into a perfection which we are fated never to know. Since they have a tongue to ſpeak as a ſtomach to

digeſt, let us not imitate their folly by preſcribing what they muſt either eat or believe.

I will receive no law but from my wants: as theſe call for the immediate recovery of my liberty, I will welcome any remedy that may procure it. In vain ſhall I hope for a perfect cure, ſo long as I refuſe the benevolent aid of pleaſure, and oppoſe not diſſipation to love: in vain ſhall I argue myſelf into indifference: — weak are words to triumph over paſſion.

Begone, thou timorous voice of ſcruple, begone! —— Ceaſe to perſecute me, to tear my heart with thy unmanly language!—— Begone! thou art but deceit and folly!

To

To thee, O Pleaſure!—forgive if I had forſaken thee—to thee I devote my future days, and intruſt my happineſs. Strike me with thy moſt poignant tranſports; purify my blood from every particle of love; let me not receive an impreſſion, delight in a thought, feel a ſenſation but what is thine. Invite all thy raptures, forget none capable to intoxicate and delude, that, ſurrounded by thy magic veil, the charms of Lady Victoria may but play upon my heart. ———

I long for the ſight of Lady Belmour—for a look of my fair Incognita. My impatient imagination flies to meet them, quickens their ſteps, forms their features of deſire and modeſty, makes them talk, anſwers them, ſees their boſoms heave, hears their ſighs, creates every motion,

opens their arms, graces their fall, enlivens the happy minute — Begone, thou timorous voice of ſcruple!—No longer will I liſten to thy impertinent delicacy —begone!

Modiſh-hall,—176—

LET-

LETTER IX.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

SURELY Miſs Elliſon believes I am not in the leaſt concerned in the behaviour of Sir John, ſince, with a ſmiling countenance, ſhe has repreſented him to me as the vileſt of men.

She was abſolutely out of character, for, though ſhe now and then indulges her ſpleen againſt her neighbours, I never knew her ſevere in her expreſſion, or expatiate long on the diſagreeable theme. She has laviſhed her abuſe with ſuch unuſual ſpirit, that one would think ſome

real intereſt warmed her breaſt, and ſharpened her wit.

Sir John may be fiery in his temper, impatient of conſtraint, faulty in his morals, not over-ſcrupulous in the choice of his pleaſures, but has he no merit to plead for indulgence—no good quality to blunt the keen arrows of malice or envy? How unreaſonable, Carolina, to weigh the vices only of a man in the ſcale of reputation! Shall a few errors obliterate every virtue? 'Tis ungenerous to aſcribe to reflection the wanderings of the ſenſes! This direct violation of the rules of equity and common ſenſe may perhaps be faſhionable in the polite circle to fill up a tedious Sunday evening. But for this inexhauſtible ſpring of converſation, how many heads without ideas! how many tongues without meaning!

Miſs

Miſs Elliſon, I am afraid, has in her laſt journey to London too freely complied with the tea-table chat of the modern fine ladies, elſe would ſhe yield to her wonted good-nature, excuſe rather than impeach, commend rather than deſpiſe, forgive rather than condemn.

Seven o'Clock.

Sir John Modiſh is, "in her humble opinion, a moſt deſpicable fellow."—She knows, for certain, that under the mien of apparent careleſſneſs his heart is ever ſtudious of deceit and miſchief.—He has ſuch a pliant temper that he can modify it into as many different ſhapes as he has intereſts to promote.—Opportunities are at his command, and they are the more ſucceſsful as they are never foreſeen.—Then he grows ſo intolerable a tyrant

over the innocent victim he has wheedled to deſtruction, that hatred naturally ſucceeding to her love, a rupture follows, the whole blame of which is thus artfully forced upon her.——By this means he has the addreſs to paſs for a man of honour among thoſe whom the charms of his wit and figure inſpire with a prepoſſeſſion in his favour."——

Who gave you, Miſs, ſo minute a detail of the actions and character of Sir John?——

Who, Miſs!——why, every body in London, every body in the country.——

And you implicitly believe what every body told you?——

It is too extraordinary, I confeſs, to be eaſily credited: but why miſtruſt people who

who had no motive to impoſe on my credulity?——

How came you to find every body ſo unconcerned, and yet ſo ready to defame him? Did they all know him? Had they all ſtudied his temper, watched his connections, ſhared in his pleaſures?——

Lord! my Lady, people need not ſo intimate an acquaintance with a man to know what he is. His public behaviour is an unerring thermometer of his worth: by it our eſteem or contempt riſes or falls. How could we attain a greater certainty of his character? Who would be convicted, were we to judge of the guilty upon the ſole teſtimony of our eyes? Fine indeed, were we to truſt to that ſenſe alone for our opinion of men! It would be high time, truly, to oppoſe an attack when we ſee victory in the looks of the enemy, and

our

our heart is half diſpoſed to ſubmit.—You may ſpare your ſuſpicions, my Lady, and generouſly miſtruſt what I was told, and tell you of Sir John's character.—Think not, however, I have magnified it: I gave it you in miniature.———

You are mighty charitable, Miſs.—The picture is finely coloured——there wants but—the likeneſs.———

You don't think it finiſhed then?——

I do not.———

How averſe we are to believe any thing that may prejudice a lover!———

A lover, Miſs!———

Yes, my Lady, a lover. Does not Sir John love you?———

Love me! Have you been told that too by every body?———

Can you affirm he does not?———

How can I affirm or deny what I am not certain of?———

Thou art a myſterious girl, Victoria.—And ſo thou haſt done with thy ſincerity?———

Have I not anſwered you?——

Are words an anſwer, Victoria?——

Suppoſe Sir John loves me, or loves me not, What then?———

I did not aſk thee a ſuppoſition, Victoria.———

I cannot give you any thing more poſitive.—Would you have a certainty, put the queſtion to Sir John.———

How

How ſhe coloured, Carolina!

Shall I do it in thy name, Victoria?—

And ſhe ſneered.

I have no curioſity, Miſs. As you have, pray do it in your own.———

Friendſhip is ever wrong when its language agrees not with our inclinations.—I have made the remark twenty times in my life, and yet I could ſpeak!—Had I known, Victoria, thou waſt ſo attached to Sir John, I had been ſilent.—'Tis folly to attempt the cure of a heart that loathes the remedy.———

I fear, Elliſon, this is your caſe.——

I don't underſtand you, Victoria.——

And ſhe looked diſturbed.

You

You are not yourſelf, Miſs. I know not my diſcreet friend in the abuſive Elliſon.—What has perplexed you?—

Perplexed me! exclaimed ſhe immediately with an affected ſmile. Why, thy intolerable incredulity——thy mortifying diffidence of me——thy imputing to ſelf-intereſt motives which only flow from my friendſhip for thee.——

How can I believe your account of Sir John, when you believe it not yourſelf?—

This is a riddle indeed——How will you explain it, Victoria?——

By telling you that, being abſolutely ignorant of his love and demerits, you intended to banter, not convince me of either——that you are too juſt to be partial, too generous to offend.——

'Tis

'Tis a hard taſk to perſuade her who will not believe.—I will leave off a topic ſo odious to thy heart. I talked as a friend—thou ſhalt not upbraid me if thy infatuation be one day fatal to thee.—

Eleven o'Clock.

Didſt thou ever hear, Carolina, of an opinion ſo obſtinately defended, of a curioſity ſo indiſcreetly inquiſitive, of a calumny ſo openly purſued? Whence this extraordinary proceeding?—— A cauſe muſt be found.——Shall I look for it in love, hatred or indifference?

Indifference is not injurious.——Love! can love vilify, or even ſuppoſe a defect in the favourite object?——Hatred!——has Sir John offended Miſs Elliſon?——Both were here on Monday.——Both——

far

far from appearing his enemy, I thought her behaviour came nearer familiarity than reſerve.

She ſuffered him to ſmell a noſegay ſhe wore at her boſom, ſmiled at his eager look, and ſtarted not at a ſudden touch of his lips. —— Was not the man very bold, Carolina? Elliſon bluſhed not——I did ——Oh! Sir John it was not right.—— My heart ceaſed to beat —— I thought I ſhould faint.

He admired her ring——ſhe immediately put it on his finger, proteſted it never appeared to greater advantage, and moved that finger every way to ſee the play of the brilliants. Her wantonneſs pleaſed him——he grew leſs ſenſible of my

my preſence——he kiſſed her hand —— I hated her.

She praiſed his taſte in dreſs, made him twice relate a foreign anecdote, and twice ſhewed the ſame delight at hearing it.—At laſt ſhe whiſpered me "None, Victoria, affect leſs wit than Sir John, yet who diſcovers ſo much!" Two days ago he was her idol, to-day he is her ſcorn!—I am amazed.

'Till now Miſs Elliſon never attempted to talk me into a diſlike of Sir John; often has ſhe commended his parts, oftner ſtill made me obſerve the dignity of his gait, the gracefulneſs of his motion. What can ſo ſoon have incenſed her?

When Sir John firſt came into the country, people making very free with his man-

manners and character, Miſs Elliſon alone dared to riſe in his defence, and glance at frailties ſhe aſcribed to the politeneſs of the age.

" Sir John," ſaid ſhe often, " is gay, intriguing, faithleſs. Wonder not at that any more than at the ignorance of a Biſhop, or the effrontery of Doctor H***. They are all in character."

Can any glaring foible of his unknown to thee, Carolina, have come to her ear? Was not his conduct thoroughly ſcrutinized at his firſt appearance amongſt us? I will not believe it, ſo anxious were they for diſcoveries, ſo happy, as they termed it, in their intelligence, and ſo well diſpoſed to debaſe him.

Sir

Sir John viſits every where elſe as a courtier——here only as a friend. With others he counts the minutes —— with us he forgets the hours.——Is not this, Carolina, his greateſt crime, the crime that cannot be forgiven? Would not he be faultleſs in the eyes of Miſs Elliſon could ſhe, like thy Victoria, command the attendance, and fix the levity of Sir John? Does not her pride grudge me an advantage ſhe wiſhes to enjoy? Is not her contempt of him a relief to her ſpite?

She told me of Lady Belmour, of Sir John —— what did ſhe not tell me?—— Were I to believe but the half—Carolina, of all her ſtrokes this was the keeneſt. It went to my very ſoul. My heart flew to my eyes to melt into tears —— my breath

was

was quick——how intent were her looks! how ſhe would have known what paſſed within me!——A few tears warned me of my indiſcretion.—— Dear Elliſon, exclaimed I, ſpare thy virtue the criminal narration: let me hear no more: it becomes us not to dwell on ſuch topics.

Why a tear, Victoria, ſince thou haſt no concern with Sir John and Lady Belmour?——

I eſteemed her Ladyſhip——you tell me of her fall——Can you be ſurpriſed at my ſenſibility?——

Miſs Elliſon laughed, went on, but ſaid ſo much that I thought it both fooliſh and indecent to give ear to her.

Cer-

Certain, Carolina, that thy friendſhip for me is as ſincere as thy virtue, thee alone will I truſt for Sir John's character; by thee alone ſhall my opinion be ruled.

Brenton Hall, 176——

LET-

LETTER X.

Sir JOHN MODISH to LORD PELHAM.

AS rapid in my amours, Frederick, as Cæſar in his wars, I loved, attacked and conquered. The honour of my former victories I partook with Fortune; this is mine alone.——Of all my triumphs, this is the nobleſt; I glory in no other.

My ſenſes have been gratified with the moſt lively tranſports, the moſt rapturous bliſs. The banquet was moſt luxurioufly inviting—I feaſted on the boſom of Lady Belmour, forgot every ſcruple on her lips, and loſt Victoria in her arms.

Love

Love and juſtice conſpired againſt Lord Belmour. He himſelf, Frederick, by throwing numberleſs obſtacles in my way, ſolicited me to the delights I have enjoyed. He, more attractively than his lady's beauty and virtue, heightened my deſires, inflamed my imagination. He run before his fate to meet the puniſhment due to tyrannical huſbands; and from me, as the miniſter predeſtined to execute the irrevocable decree, has he received it. How, when and where thou ſhalt know.—Thou rebukeſt me, Frederick. For once I will make an apology——take this ſketch of the man's private life.

Educated in all the inſolence of birth, riches, and power, Lord Belmour thinks himſelf the center round which men ought to move in ſearch of fortune and happineſs.

His

His ambition and profligacy keep even pace, nor is it eaſy to diſtinguiſh which is grown moſt familiar to his heart.

His contempt of honour can only be equalled by the baſeneſs of his ſoul: never was a man of his rank leſs enamoured of virtue, and more laviſh of its ſacred language.

That tyranny which he now exerts over men of genius, he once exerted over his amiable lady. In the infancy of their marriage, he preſumed that, in his hands, ſhe ſhould, like wax, be modified to his fancy; he would have had her perpetually ſympathize with his follies, never fluctuate between his inclination and her own judgment. He furniſhed her library, preſided at her toilet, choſe her muſic, preſcribed her amuſements, form-

ed her ſociety. He carried his authority ſo far as to order her motions, and dictate the degree of wit ſhe was to diſplay at home or abroad.

Lady Belmour, whom her pious mother had carefully brought up in the *reaſonable* fear of devils being ready to ſeize upon her at the firſt deviation from her conjugal duty, and hourly tutored on the ſacred prerogative of her lord, for a long while ſmothered her complaints, and concealed her tears.

So long as ſhe ſaw the devils, and trembled in the dark, ſhe remained paſſively obedient. But Sir Henry Ravenſor, her brother, returning from his travels, the infernal band vaniſhed—nature mutinied—called aloud for liberty, and threatened

ened Lord Belmour with an open rebellion.

Six o'Clock.

Sir Henry loved his ſiſter too tenderly not to perceive ſhe was unhappy, and attempt to procure her a life more ſuitable to her age, rank and fortune.

The difficulty was incredible, the ſucceſs doubtful. He had to combat bigotry, ever moſt obſtinate in the practice of ſuperficial duties, when religion orders them not, and the ferocity of a man born with an innate hatred to benevolence.

For two months Lady Ravenſor continued deaf to his ſolicitations. Her love for him, not reaſon, at length convinced her that the ſolitude in which her daughter was buried, was not only an

attack upon her liberty, but a temptation to her virtue.

Lord Belmour was more intractable. As he loved but himſelf, his mind was dead to perſuaſion, as his heart to generoſity. He could not patiently think of a diminution of his power, much leſs an impeachment of his wiſdom. He ſwore that ſo unuſual a requeſt betrayed in Lady Belmour a heart already corrupted, or ripe for corruption. He would liſten to no mediator, damned the thoughts of one, and would, in his fury, have forbid Sir Henry his houſe, had not his cowardice warned him to be prudent.

As neither virtue nor reaſon could work Lord Belmour out of his ſavage obſtinacy, Sir Henry vowed his ſiſter ſhould no longer be the ſport of his ridiculous ca-

caprice, and inſiſted on immediately carrying her to Lady Ravenſor, unleſs he would allow her all the privileges inherent to a woman of quality, and free her from his odious tyranny.

Awed by his firmneſs, Lord Belmour, after mumbling a number of unintelligible curſes, ſat down penſive, perplexed, irreſolute, when his Lady entered the room with a modeſt, but aſſured countenance.

I have heard all, my Lord, and ſince my brother has ſo generouſly taken upon him the protection of his unhappy ſiſter———

Unhappy!—What do I hear?——

The language of truth, my Lord. My ſufferings have been too great. Still ſhould they be unknown, had you been humane enough to reſpect the delicacy of my ſex, and not miſtruſt my virtue.———

Stranger ſtill! Had you once oppoſed my intreaties, I——but you always readily yielded to them. Was it againſt your inclination that you preferred the retired ſcenes of Brampton-Park to the noiſy abode of Groſvenor-Square?———

My Lord, you never gave me a choice to make, but a command to obey.——

The converſation, Frederick, was continued with the ſame ſpirit, till Lord Belmour, diſtracted by the fear of loſing an immenſe fortune, reluctantly ſubmitted.

From

From that day Lady Belmour enlarged the circle of her acquaintance, paſſed her winters in London, and viſited Bath and Tunbridge whenever ſhe had a mind to add to, or ſhare in their pleaſures.

The freedom ſhe enjoyed was torment to his Lordſhip—her happineſs his death. To embitter it, he ſet every engine at work which imagination, animated by malice, could ſuggeſt.

He deſerted her bed for that of an abandoned proſtitute, he—and the wretch talks of a divorce.—Lord Belmour of a divorce!

How aſtoniſhing that in England, where the women are ſo amiable, ſo worthy of adoration, that there are huſbands publicly drowned in debauch

——that theſe very huſbands will talk of a divorce! 'ſdeath! and our wiſe ſenate will not make a law to ſcreen a defenceleſs ſex from the vile attempts of their daring, though guilty perſecutors!

Ten o'Clock.

Can a woman be guilty whoſe huſband has taught her to deſpiſe her duty by firſt throwing himſelf into the paths of libertiniſm? Can he complain of her vices who firſt raſed every virtue from her heart? Would a general arraign the bravery of his troops if, ſending them armleſs againſt a powerful enemy, they were ſubdued and taken? No: their defeat would diſgrace but himſelf.

I have ſeldom heard of a woman whom her huſband has not firſt tempted into gallantry,

gallantry, and never of a huſband who would acknowledge the neceſſity of her infidelity. O man, man, how vain, how inconſiſtent thou art!

When I met Lady Belmour in London, I had been ſo lately engaged with Mrs. Howard that, though I thought it a moſt meritorious act to chaſtiſe her Lord, I could not poſſibly abandon a woman, ſtill in the firſt fervency of her love for me. I gave, however, a few hints of my intention, and as ſoon as I was at liberty to pay my devoirs to her, without hurting my honour and generoſity, flew to Groſvenor-ſquare.

I found in Lady Belmour all the qualities I had long wiſhed for in a miſtreſs, and ever deſpaired to find. A graceful

form, unaffected wit, charming vivacity, delicate ſentiment, attractive ingenuity, the look of love, the voice of pleaſure, the ſmile of deſire, were all blended, all united, all either exacting homage, or calling for a kiſs.

Whether Lady Belmour was really virtuous, was otherwiſe engaged, or her hour of loving was not yet come, my attacks, for ſome weeks, proved unſucceſsful. In vain had I ſet all the batteries of nature and art in play againſt her, had not her huſband forced her to capitulate by depriving her of all means of defence.

He once heightened her indignation to ſuch a degree, that falling on ſuddenly when anger ſuppreſſed her uſual valour, I inſtantly took poſſeſſion of the out-works, ſeized every avenue, ſtormed, was almoſt maſter

maſterof the place, when a ſneeze announcing the preſence of the governor I was compelledto retire, juſt time enough to recover my inoffenſive look. Oh, Frederick! favoured by victory, yet to loſe the day! how I raved and curſed!

A favourable opportunity in love, as in war, once loſt is ſeldom regained. The next day Lord and Lady Belmour ſet off for Bath.

Time, abſence, new intrigues, chaced her from my heart, 'till coming hither on the wings of love and curioſity, Fortune threw me in her way, and revived the almoſt extinguiſhed flame.

No neck was ever formed more purpoſely for the ſight, no breaſt for the touch, no lips for the kiſs, no arms to incircle the happy lover, no tongue to warm him with all

all the enthuſiaſm of love.—Her motions—Oh, Frederick! not blood, but an heavenly ſpirit gives each limb its proper activity—ſhe moves but to enjoy.—Could you ſee the languor of her eye—could you heave with her pantings in the minute ſhe—My hand ſhakes—the pen drops.

Modiſh-Hall, 176——.

LET-

LETTER XI.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

I Muſt contrive, Victoria, to have my inclination oppoſed: that is the only way to make me inſenſible to the bad qualities of Lord Pelerſton.

Our love has no poignancy in it. A flowery path grows at length diſguſtful; a lonely rock, and a ſteep hill, are often more pleaſing to the eye. My head is too cool, Victoria: I ſee, hear and judge as if I had no heart. No foible, no impertinence of Lord Pelerſton eſcapes me: I could almoſt *ſing* his faults and my indifference

ference. My reaſon carries it too clear againſt paſſion——'tis plain I love him not.

Lady Pelham and my brother openly take his part, laugh at my uneaſineſs, juſtify his indiſcretions: from theſe attempts in his favour I ſhall certainly hate him.

I deteſted Fanfly becauſe I was ordered to love him—what is the difference between leave and command? For my part, I ſee none.——I am ſure I ſhould diſlike to walk, did not the weather ſometimes turn bad and oppoſe my inclination.

Men ſay they know us--why then do they act as if they knew us not? We are certainly of value enough to deſerve the pains of being won; they are convinced of it; and yet they fooliſhly miſtake the means. They teaſe us with tempting ſighs, fruit-

fruitleſs deſires, attract every ſenſe, amuſe each, and fix none. Had a lover in the purſuit of a heart the ſagacity he ſhows in that of a place or a penſion, poor woman! would I exclaim: and really, Victoria, how ſhould we reſiſt? — The unſkilfulneſs of men befriends us more than our virtue. Whoſe fault is it? not mine. Adieu.

* * * * * * * * * *

One word more, ſweet girl.

I have forgiven Lord Pelerſton, and admitted him to the honour of helping me on with my glove—but what will it avail him to be in favour again if he knows not how to deſerve it? His jealouſy will not do, for the more he is afraid of loſing me, the leſs do I care for him. Are not his apprehenſions a certainty I am neceſſary to his happineſs? On my word, I am not generous

nerous enough to give myſelf up to him for that alone——I will have my ſhare in his happineſs, or from me he ſhall have none. When he is at my feet looking, talking, ſighing, to be ſure he has great advantages. I reflect not then on his faults; but he is hardly out of the room, when I ſing, dance, play and forget him. He is, by turns, every thing and nothing to me: I cannot help it.

The gentleman having ſolemnly vowed to renounce his former follies has, with them loſt his ſprightlineſs, is dwindled into a downright dotard of ſixty, and will now talk nothing but grave nonſenſe. If I gape or yawn he don't mind it. He has ſeen me do the ſame at a Charity-Sermon, and very likely imagines 'tis a compliment I pay him; for it matters not, with ſome men,

men, what ſenſations they give us, if they are but pleaſed with themſelves.

When not alone with me he is ſtupid, and even then have I with myſelf a few exclamations of wonder how I can love him.——I muſt give him leave to be impertinent again. Under that form he has ſallies which may amuſe me; but this he now aſſumes is as inconſiſtent with wit or humour, Victoria, as affectation would be with thy beauty.

I ſpoiled my pretty face this morning with ſome patches, a toupee ten inches high, and a load of powder to put him out of conceit with it, or at leaſt have an half hour's quarrel. I looked ſo frightful, Victoria, I durſt not caſt a glance at the glaſs. I was aſhamed of the ridiculous fancy—— I was wrong, for my Lord aſſured me that the patches and toupee gave my features

features a charming *je ne ſcais quoi* he had never diſcovered before. I burſt into laughter, turned him out, rang for Lucy, ſat down to my toilet, and in ten minutes was myſelf again.

An undiſputed ſway is the moſt diſagreeable advantage one can poſſeſs: 'tis inſtant death to the flattering certainty we deſerve it. I ſcorn ſuch power. If Modeſty bluſhes at a praiſe Truth gives her, what muſt ſhe not ſuffer when Flattery beſtows it!

At the rate Lord Pelerſton goes on I'll outrun him; he ſhall not catch me.—Another courſe muſt he take, or he ſhall ſigh, eternally ſigh, without the poor comfort of a ſmile. 'Tis his fault; why does he not know better? Were he to ſay to himſelf, "Fool that I am! inſtead of feeding

her

her vanity, let me alarm it—let my aſſiduity, by degrees, ſink into neglect—let her be jealous of me, not I of her."—— Were he to ſay ſo, Victoria, and to act accordingly, then indeed—the odds would be againſt me.

London, 176——

LET-

LETTER XII.

Sir JOHN MODISH to LORD PELHAM.

IT was one o'clock--That I may be more certain, for in theſe important events I am exact to a ſecond, let me take a peep at my Journal of Intrigues. I was wrong. Juſt eleven minutes paſt one, laſt Tueſday, as I was driving furiouſly through a narrow lane, I run againſt a chariot with ſuch amazing velocity, that it unluckily overturned, and one of the wheels ſplit in pieces. The accident was ſo ſudden, that neither horſes nor poſtillions had time or thought to prevent it. I heard a ſhriek, and knowing Lord Belmour's livery, immediately alighted and flew

flew to the relief of ——— of Lady Belmour.

" Lady Belmour, Sir John ! "

Yes, Lady Belmour, Frederick, with all her ſmiles and graces. ———

How I hate myſelf, my Lady !——

And my looks, Frederick, abſolutely told her the contrary.

I don't believe you, Sir John. You are too fond of conqueſt not to rejoice in my fall.——

Happy omen! whiſpered I.——But are you not hurt? ———

Not in the leaſt. ———

I preſented my hand, and helped her out of the chariot.

Could I not have the pleaſure of your company, Sir John, but by running the riſk of my life?——

And ſhe ſmiled.

The ſervants coming up, I made no anſwer.

Where was you going, my Lady?——

To Brenton-hall.——

So was I.——

'Twas a lie. Start not, Frederick. Falſehood and curioſity are the moſt familiar ſins of women and lovers——no pleaſure without them.

If ſo, I will ride in your coach.——

And ſhe chearfully ſtepped in, directing ſome of her people to follow, and the reſt to go home.

Is

Is not this a droll accident, Sir John? How could Lord Belmour prevent this *tête à tête* with you, and in your own coach?———

Fortune, dear Belmour, delights in defeating the foreſight of jealous huſbands, and complimenting youth and beauty with the power of revenge.———

And I raviſhed a kiſs.

Fy, Sir John! ſteal a kiſs on the high way!———

Well, take it back, let me not have it on my conſcience.———

And I returned it on her lips.

Did you not purpoſely overturn my chariot, you miſchievous man?———

Had not the accident nearly proved tragical, I would glory in having cauſed it.—

You

You are worthy to inſpire ſo happy an invention, ſtill worthier to reap the benefit of it.——

And then———

No ſneezer to fear, dear Belmour ——

And then———

Are you mad, Sir John? How preſuming! our people———

The blinds were pulled up—then down ——then——Frank and Tom drove ſo furiouſly——What to do? how diſpoſe of one's ſelf, Frederick, in a damned flying coach ſurrounded by four ſervants, in broad day-light?

Shall your Lord's Genius ſtill prevail over mine? ———

She gave me a gentle pat on the cheek.

He

He will conquer, Sir John, I ſee you are unlucky.———

The jeſt was keen, Frederick, though ſoftened by a ſigh.

I'll puniſh thee, Belmour.———

And then———

Stop, thou unſeaſonable tormenter, ſtop. Sir John!——in this coach!——What wilt thou attempt!——Prepoſterous!—— Keep off thy roving hand — that blind— What will the ſervants think?——Hold ——Receive this, and this, and this, as a certainty of thy triumph over Belmour.———

She bleſſed me with three kiſſes.

Exact no more——ſpare my delicacy the fear of a ſurpriſe.———

If thou loveſt me, Belmour.———

Is not thy victory over my modeſty a certain pledge of my love for thee?——

'Tis not compleat, Fortune favours me but by halves——thy Lord is ſtill the conqueror.——

Is he ſo, Sir John, when my virtue has ſuffered thee in my arms?——

Ah, Belmour! let us equal his puniſhment to thy wrongs. ——Remember how guilty —— how undeſerving the pleaſures thou canſt give. —— Will ſuch an opportunity offer again? ——Is he not thy ſhadow?——Enjoy, dear Belmour, enjoy all the delights of love, ſince thou art curſed with all the miſeries of wedlock.——

She approached my lips, and ſighing upon them——

Have

Have I not told thee thou haſt my heart, Sir John?——

I hear thee, Belmour. Prepare thy ſoul for the exquiſite raptures of love and revenge.

Calling immediately to the poſtillions—

My Lady wants ſome reſt, ſtop at the WHEAT-SHEAF.

This is an inn of which we were within fifty paces.

How that order has alarmed my ſenſes! Recall it, Sir John, do, recall it.——

I preſſed her hand, and we rode into the yard.

Lady Belmour ſaying that her accident had made her extremely faint, the

landlady uſhered us into a parlour, whence ſtepping to a back bed-room with her Ladyſhip, ſhe officiouſly inſiſted on undreſſing her.

My Lady declined her offer, as ſhe propoſed to reſt but a few minutes, and deſired a glaſs of wine.

Whilſt the good woman went to fetch it, I ſhewed myſelf to the ſervants, and ſpoke a word to my truſty Duval.

Seeing the landlady approach, I ordered ſome refreſhment to the parlour, and thither I went.

Five o'Clock.

I was no ſooner alone than I ſlipt into the back room.

Alas!

Alas, traiterous heart!——how inviting thy impulſe! Sir John! thou my amiable deluder, come not near me ——be my protector againſt myſelf.——

What a charming confuſion ſhe was in, Frederick!

Come not near———

And ſhe opened her arms to receive me.

Thy touch is life to my ſoul —— death to my virtue——Oh! leave me— —

She preſſed me to her boſom.

My lips had hardly been voluptuouſly fixed, when the cracking of a whip forced my ſoul from its enchantment. In the firſt dawn of delight, Frederick, how provoking!

What noiſe do I hear? Is it my huſband? Exclaimed the frighted Lady Belmour.

My happineſs ſhall be ſacrificed to thy reputation.——Feign to ſleep; thou haſt nothing to apprehend. —— And ſweeping a kiſs, I ſtole back to the parlour, panting with rage and pleaſure.

I peeped through the window and ſaw—whom do you think? —— How my heart fluttered! A cold ſweat inſtantly covered my face —— never was criminal more confounded at the aſpect of his judge —— my head hung down in all the horror of guilt. —— What have I done? *right* ſaid *Diſcretion*—*wrong* cried, ſtill louder, *Love*.—Though my confuſion had been quicker than thought, the debate was ſhort: ſelf-intereſt parted the fray——I curſed love, and retired to the darkeſt corner of the parlour.

Lady

Lady Victoria, Miſs Elliſon, Froſby, and ſome gentlemen, all on horſeback, at an hundred yards from the houſe.—— Surely, Frederick, ſuch a ſhape as that of Victoria gave the firſt idea of a riding-dreſs and brought it into faſhion.—The hat and feather give ſo rebellious an air to the whole countenance, that it tempts one to attack and conquer.—Add to this the inexpreſſible charm of innocence.——That ſight, not my virtue, diſturbed me: this has not over me the power of Lady Victoria.—No more—'tis ſinful to think or talk of her.

Though I had provided againſt a diſcovery, ſuſpicion might have entered their hearts, — Frederick! I never yet expoſed her who made me happy.——I will ever loſe the glory of a conqueſt, rather than diſgrace the generous author of my tri-

umph: her reputation is dearer to me than my own—'tis the moſt ſacred charge that can be committed to the truſt of man.

To tell thee I wiſhed the noble cavalcade an hundred fathom in the bowels of the earth, is a poſitive truth; except Lady Victoria, however, whom to puniſh for her untimely appearance I would have placed on the very bed with Lady Belmour, The image was too luxurious—it was more than mortal could poſſibly hope for, or poſſeſs.

An hand-gallop ſoon brought them within hearing — every limb quaked.— Soon they were out of ſight — every ſenſe revived.

After

After having remanded my ſentinel to his duty, ſecured the doors, gulped down a glaſs of wine, and indulged my ſoul with a momentary recollection of the beauties it was to enjoy, I hurried to Lady Belmour.

Thanks to my ſtars, Belmour, this was but a panic terror.——But what do I ſee?—In tears! ——

Thou haſt cauſed them, Sir John: they are tears of love— the laſt ſtruggles of expiring virtue—the forerunners of thy joy.—Be generous—be ſatisfied with the certainty of having no rival in my heart. —What fire in thy eye!—Look not—that kiſs—oh!——Thou wilt not hear me——

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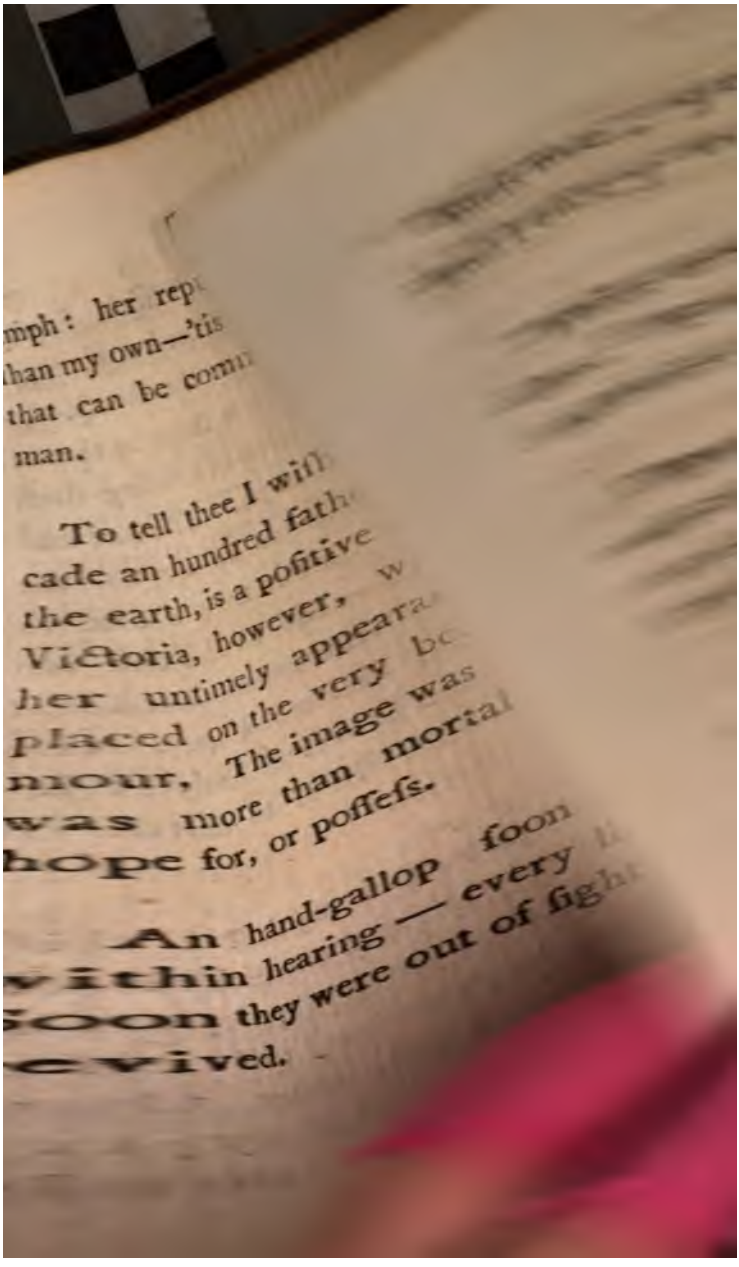

Aft ered ſhe was well, and impa-
his du ſ for Brenton-hall, I quick-
a glaſs ce and was preſently with
with a
beautie
Belmou ne gate.

Than not tell your people where
was but Sir John? I have been
I ſee?— our.—Come, loſe no time
apology—I ought myſelf
Thou having kept you ſo long
are tear e.———
expiring
joy.—Be aiting for my anſwer ſhe
certaint oach, I after her, and
—What
kiſs—o

n at night.

Lady

Bleſs me, ye gods, with hours like this, and I envy not your glory !———

This exclamation was not very orthodox, Frederick, but I took myſelf for Adonis in the arms of Venus.

Decency, which I always obey when I write to thee, permits me not to mention the ſighs ending in a kiſs—the words in—I muſt tell thee nothing.

To preclude all poſſibility of ſuſpicion, I got unperceived into the fields, and appeared not till the minute I ſpied the ſervants in queſt of me.

How is Lady Belmour ?———

Being

Being anſwered ſhe was well, and impatient to ſet off for Brenton-hall, I quickened my pace and was preſently with her.

She was at the gate.

Why did you not tell your people where you was going, Sir John? I have been ready this half hour.—Come, loſe no time in framing an apology—I ought myſelf to apologiſe for having kept you ſo long in this lonely place.———

And without waiting for my anſwer ſhe tripped to the coach, I after her, and away we drove.

Eleven at night.

Lady

Lady Belmour took my hand, and carrying it to her lips with an animated bluſh———

Sir John!———

Well, dear Belmour.———

Sir John!———

And a tear betrayed the inward emotion.———

How weak I have been!———

The tear, Frederick, and the tone of her voice went to my heart. I threw my arm round her, and preſſing her to my boſom———

Doſt thou regret my happineſs?———

Had

Had I yielded to thy love, I would triumph in my defeat—thy pleaſure ſhould be my glory.—Thou haſt only given me thy imagination; thy heart was a gift thou couldſt not preſent me with.—Thy looks, thy language, thy mien, thy tranſports, are the very expreſſions, the very features, the ſpeaking picture of love.—Thou haſt his breath, his touch, his fury and his impatience.—Thou attackeſt armed with all his illuſions.—faint is reſiſtance againſt thee—eaſily doſt thou wheedle the heart, intoxicate the head.—But thou mighty ſeducer———

She drew nearer to my breaſt, and fixed her roſy lips on my left eye.

To thy fiery nature, not real paſſion, have I to day ſacrificed a virtue, which the conſtant injuries of a deteſted huſband had

had not theſe five years been capable to weaken.———

Too much delicacy, Belmour, is the bane of pleaſure, the certain poiſon of happineſs. Let us not ſearch into the nature of our ſenſations. —— I ſwear to thee, and I am this minute as true as thou art lovely, that my heart is ſolely thine.—

Thou art ſtill, Sir John, in the firſt heat of thy gratitude——but ſoon Lady Victoria———

I ſhuddered at the name.

Tell me not of her——does ſhe not love Froſby?———

Doſt thou love her the leſs for that? —

Canſt thou ſuppoſe me ſo weak?

She has beauty with all the charms of innocence, thou haſt a heart —— I knew thy

thy affection for her——I knew it, Sir John, and yet——Oh! hate me not though I have yielded to thee.——

Thou merciless self-tormentor, poſſeſs the preſent, trouble not the delightful ſerenity of our ſouls by unſeaſonable fears.——Chain me to thy arms by inexhauſtible joys——Let me fear to loſe and forever will I adore thee.——If thou thinkeſt I love Lady Victoria, add a new poignancy to every charm——Awake every day a new beauty——divert my paſſion with a variety of characters——unite every contraſt——ſet up by turns for a prude and a coquette——refuſe, grant, heighten my deſires, perpetuate my emotions, and watchful as the virgins conſecrated to *Veſta*, keep thy fire eternally burning in my heart.——

How

How Lady Belmour looked, ſmiled, talked—how—how—We lived more, Frederick, in ten minutes, than thou haſt done in ten years. What are the wanderings of nature, if imagination grace them not?

As we entered the grand avenue which leads to Brenton-Hall, Duval told us Lord Belmour was ſeen half a mile behind on the common.

'Tis too late for him, Sir John, to oppoſe thy victory when thou haſt carried the honours of the day.—— How he now raves at an accident he could not foreſee!——how happy he did not!——

And thou wouldſt have me not love the charming prattler, Frederick?——Pray tell me ſo again, that thou mayeſt keep my imagi-

imagination alive. I will thank thee for it.

We had hardly paid our compliments to the ladies when his Lordſhip entered the room.

You have made great haſte, my Lord: you ſurely thought I was dying, no other concern could have prevented your journey to Penrith. Well, be comforted—— the fall was not dangerous: I never was better in my life.——

And ſhe immediately related the danger ſhe had been in.

How ſternly the man looked while ſhe facetiouſly told her adventure! The company, however, gradually cleared his brow; he grew polite enough to return an acknowledgement to the congratulations made him on my Lady's eſcape.

Wouldſt

Wouldſt thou believe that Lady Victoria looked into my countenance for more than Lady Belmour related?——What! does the girl grow curious?——I'll think of it. Adieu.

Modiſh-hall, 176——

LET-

LETTER XIII.

Lady VICTORIA NEVIL to Lady CAROLINA PELHAM.

I Have loſt the heart of Sir John, Carolina: no longer can I believe my fancy, which ſtill would paint him tender and adoring. ——My hopes are vaniſhed, he loves me no more.——My indifference was an offence his pride could not brook —— O Modeſty! why didſt thou compell me to diſſemble! One word or look would have captivated Sir John.——Is there any crime in a look or a word? — Virtue tells me No. —Would I had conſulted that alone, and declined the viſits of Froſby! His aſſiduity which, in obedience to Mrs. Brenton, I daily ſuffered, has undone me.—I am the

victim

victim of my reſpect for my aunt, of my eſteem for Froſby.—Sir John has deſerted me!—How ſhould he have loved when his rival ſeemed to poſſeſs my ear, when I ſeemed happy in his paſſion?

An event has convinced me of Sir John's indifference. It was, I fear, his own work—he was himſelf the cauſe of it.—What torment in the thought!

Lady Belmour was on her way to Brenton-Hall laſt Tueſday, when Sir John overturning her chariot, ſhe was obliged to take a place in his coach. This was not all, Carolina. They ſtopped about two hours at a lonely inn a few miles from hence.—Two hours!—alone with Sir John!—I muſt not think of theſe two hours.—When they arrived, and ſhe related the fright ſhe had been in, I ſaw but pleaſure

pleaſure in her looks, but life in her expreſſion. — Her hair was in the utmoſt confuſion — her handkerchief, her apron rumpled.—I left the room, and retired to my cloſet, to excite my virtue to a contempt of the perfidious man. But how weak my anger! Whilſt I taught my tongue the language of indignation, my heart contradicted it, and beat in his defence. The injury dwindled into love. I blamed my falſe delicacy alone for the deſertion of Sir John, and was even more diſpleaſed with his new amour, than offended at his guilt.

Once I tried to diſcredit that handkerchief, that apron—but Lady Belmour could not ſo ſoon aſſume the countenance of vice; her features betrayed the happineſs of Sir John.— She never before failed in her duty, how could ſhe feign?

The

The ſullenneſs of Miſs Elliſon was aſtoniſhing. Had ſhe been robbed of her only delight, her ſilence or her motions could not have been more expreſſive of diſcontent.

" Victoria, " ſaid ſhe to me, " there ſits the baſeſt of men " and ſhe pointed to Sir John.

I affected the utmoſt amazement.

What has he done, Miſs? ——

Is it not plain in his eyes?—In them do you not ſee the defeat of Lady Belmour, and the profligacy of his heart?—

I do not underſtand their language, Miſs.——

She bit her lips, and turned from me.

Poor

Poor Miſs Elliſon!—She loves him, Carolina: her diſpleaſure is a proof of her feelings. — A new rival! — I am miſerable.

Ten o'Clock.

I was this morning in a ſolitary alley of the garden, arguing in favour of Froſby againſt Sir John, when the former came to ſtrengthen my reaſons with his preſence.

So penſive, dear my Lady!———

And he kiſſed my hand.

You, Sir, was the object of my reverie. —I fear I love you not.———

Talk not thus, or I will die with ſorrow. —— Whence the cruel doubt? What fault of mine has inſpired it?—It is not

not ſurely welcome to thy heart, Victoria.———

Would it were not!—once I was certain of my inclination for you—now I am not ſo.———

Victoria! ſpare my ears the accent of indifference; look upon me with thy wonted ſoftneſs.—I am the man thou haſt promiſed to make happy. Caſt thy eyes around—thou ſhalt ſee the witneſſes of thy vows to me:—could they ſpeak, thou ſhouldſt hear but of thy love and mine.—Tell me thou loveſt me, Victoria; be our mutual paſſion our favourite theme. ——Thou ſigheſt, and turneſt thy head —thou makeſt me a wretch indeed! ——I ſhan't outlive thy coldneſs.——Revive with a ſmile my ſinking ſoul.——Behold thy Froſby, ever fond of thee, behold

behold him with thy eyes of ſympathy and pleaſure.———

His dejection, Carolina, kindled a ſpark of my old flame. I could not unmoved ſee and hear the man I once paſſionately loved: I wiſhed for thoſe deluſive hours. —That deſire almoſt melted my doubts; I grew tender.———

And you love me, Sir?———

Love you!——I ſwear———

Swear not, Froſby, if you will have me believe you: an oath is the laſt refuge of the man whoſe honour is loſt.———

My heart is your's, Victoria: it never heaved but for you.——I was born to be inſenſible to the charms of every other woman—born purpoſely to adore you.—

He gently preſſed my hand to his lips.

Where could I have found a beauty who, like you, had pleaſed both my reaſon and fancy?

Your viſits to Miſs Cranmer have of late been very frequent—to me very rare—I ſeldom ſee you. —— Who is that young lady who of all men receives but you, who, though invited, never came to Brenton-Hall?——Why that bluſh?—— And you love me!———

Long before Miſs Cranmer came hither, my Lady, I was a conſtant viſitor of her uncle. The days I cannot give to love, I give to friendſhip.———

Has not your time been partially diſpoſed of?———

Mr.

Mr. Cranmer's bad ſtate of health has oftener, I own, called me to his houſe, but my heart always invited me here.——

Was it not Miſs Cranmer who thus oftener.——

Miſs Cranmer! No, never.——

I am ſorry ſhe did not.——

Sorry!——

And up he ſtarted.

Sorry! have I heard well?—— My Victoria wiſhes for my change!—— No: 'tis impoſſible, thy heart could not ſupport it.—Such another word and I am mad.—

How pleaſing his tranſports, Carolina, had I loved him! The intruding idea of Sir John blunted all their charms; they had no effect but upon my pity.—— I ſat

on a bench; he fell before me on his knee.

Thus will I remain, Victoria, till words give a lie to your countenance.—Had my happineſs no more reality than a coxcomb's dream? Were you not true?—

I was, Sir.———

Since you were, you are ſtill the ſame, I am happy.———

And quicker than thought he threw both his hands round my waiſt, and fixed me to his lips. At that very moment I heard a noiſe, and as inſtantly I ſaw Sir John. His amazement equalled my confuſion. I ſhrieked, he vaniſhed. Froſby dared to exult—"Wretch!" exclaimed I with anger, "have you no reſpect for me?—I hate you."—And turning the next alley, I went to the houſe.

I found Sir John in the hall, taking leave of Mrs. Brenton.

Sir John came to dine with us, Victoria. A buſineſs he had forgot obliges him to return to Modiſh-hall; in vain have I entreated him to ſtay — he will not perhaps deny thee.—

My influence is too ſmall, Madam, to hope for his compliance.—

I curteſied and advancing to him—

Deſpiſe me not, Sir, my heart had no ſhare in Mr. Froſby's indiſcretion.———

I trembled as I ſpoke.

Never will I entertain a ſuſpicion injurious to Lady Victoria.—Beſides, continued he, with a falſe ſmile, lovers have privileges I have no right to queſtion. Your apology is as needleſs as your for-

giveneſs for my impertinent appearance is neceſſary.— ——

Will you believe that Mr. Froſby has none of the privileges you mention? —

A falſe ſmile again, Carolina, and no anſwer.

I was diſconcerted.—If he loved me, I had certainly been underſtood.—Modeſty bid me be ſilent. I aſſumed a gayer look, and carelesly begged the favour of his company.

He would, and would not; at laſt on ſeeing Froſby, he coloured, bowed and went away.

An odd man this, Carolina. He was vexed — a true ſymptom of love! and yet, when I hint that Froſby is not my lover, he miſtruſts his ears and will not

not believe me. — 'Tis decreed I muſt be unhappy. —Were I certain of his love, would that be a ſecurity for his morals?— I am frightened to death when I think of the two hours paſſed at the Wheatſheaf— a man who loved me would not have been there two hours with Lady Belmour— how could he talk of love to her if he feels it but for me? —— Can the ſenſes be gratified when the heart partakes not in their extacy? —— Youth is not an excuſe for the want of delicacy—Sir John is doubly criminal—I rave—pity me.

Brenton Hall, 1-6 ——

LETTER XIV.

Sir JOHN MODISH to Lord PELHAM.

THE ſight of Lady Victoria is more dreadful to me than the gallows to a murderer; it fills my heart with more daſtardly terrors than that wretch can ever feel. Her preſence ſinks me below the baſeſt of mankind. — Virtue under her ſhape is the moſt formidable enemy one can encounter. Her eyes are preſent death to vice — ſhe talks, and we abhor our enjoyments. — Ten Victorias, in London would, from the moſt debauched, turn it into the moſt virtuous city of the world. Their ſmiles, better than ſermons, would teach us every duty.

duty.—'Sdeath! do I praiſe them! Curſe on this flight of my honeſty! Know, Frederick, thatI deteſt LadyVictoria as much as thou loveſt thy king and thy country—I deteſt her even to a pain of joy—my hatred is now my delight — I am perfectly happy with it.

Had I written thee a few days ago, thou wouldſt have immediately ſent me an Eſculapius, or voted me to Bedlam. —— I am calmer: I'll tell thee why I hate.

One thought of Lady Victoria robbed Lady Belmour of half her charms, and deadened the pleaſures ſhe had laviſhed on me. My ſenſes helping me not againſt it, I yielded to the irreſiſtible call of her beauty, and ventured laſt Saturday to Brenton-Hall.

Victoria's preſence, ſaid I to myſelf, will force repentance on my heart—what ſignifies it? I will ſee her. Then, Frederick, I fancied no other bliſs.—Damn the hour I was tempted to go!—Inſtead of an angel, I found—a woman.——Wretched diſappointment!

Being told that Lady Victoria was in the garden, thither I ſtepped. Turning an alley—what a ſight! Victoria in the arms of Froſby—Froſby enjoying life on her lips.—Paint to thyſelf the aſtoniſhment of a noble Lord on the news of the birth of a ſon ſome happier man has begot——the miſery of an old dotard at the elopement of his young wife with her gallant—thy imagination will fall ſhort of my agony. The ſight was intolerable——It was but a kiſs——was it not returned? Damnation is in the doubt

doubt.---Her trouble at my appearance was exquisite---her looks told me she was not guilty---the looks of a woman!---had I at that moment been armed --- thou shouldst hear now of Victoria, of Frosby, of Sir John, but to know they had lived.--- I hastily left the garden, and pretending business required my immediate return, was taking my leave of Mrs. Brenton when Victoria entered the hall with an open but dejected countenance.---Not the smallest impression of hypocrisy in her eyes, Frederick---an angel again in every feature.---She came to me, and "begged I would not despise her: her heart had no share in Frosby's indiscretion." I was confounded at the unexpected condescension. Why an apology? What is my esteem or displeasure to her? Since

she

ſhe loves Froſby, ſhe was innocent. I told her of the "privileges of lovers." —— She anſwered "Froſby had none." Good creature! ſhe ſaw my love in my confuſion, and out of generoſity leſſened the advantages of Froſby. Her goodneſs affected me---I ſighed, took her hand---.

Stay, and dine with us, Sir John. Will you not ſtay?——

Her voice, Frederick, will ever give new life to the man who hears it. I ſaid Yes, I ſaid No, then Yes, when beholding Froſby in the garden, jealouſy fired my blood, I ſaid No, and flew from the hall. I muſt not think of her, or my hatred will melt away---- my ſoul will feel—my pen write—but of love.——Victoria in his

arms

arms---his lips---torturing remembrance!---A letter from thee, Frederick.

* * * * * * * * * *

Thou man of little faith, truſt not to thy reaſon, but believe me when I tell thee that I did not ſpeak a word to Lady Belmour which was not dictated by my heart.

I have two hearts within me whoſe paſſions and ſenſibility differ as much as French *politeſſe* and Engliſh generoſity. That on which is engraved the ſacred image of Victoria reigns in a calm.---The other, like a veſſel on a tempeſtuous ſea toſſed about by winds and waves, is the perpetual ſport of my ſpirits, riſes, ſwims, ſinks at their pleaſure, and was on duty at the Wheat-ſheaf.

'Twas

'Twas this that, raging at the luxurious proſpect of rapturous joys, was carried off by a ſtorm of fierce deſires, and ſighed, and talked, and ſwore, and poſſeſſed.

Modiſh-hall, —176—

L. E. T.

LETTER XV.

Lady CAROLINA PELHAM to Lady VICTORIA NEVIL.

TO another tune muſt I dance now, Victoria. As I was always out of time to that of jealouſy, my ſweet Peterſton has invented one — 'tis abſolutely his own compoſition. Never before has it been ſet for a girl of twenty. I fear I ſhall be but a bad ſcholar, ſo *capricioſi* are both the muſic and fidler. Refrain thy curioſity, for I cannot at preſent ſatisfy it. Lord Pelham is coming.——

Always writing, Carolina!——

When

When friendſhip dictates the hand is never tired.——

You are too good, ſiſter, to tell me whom you write to.——

Whom is it to, my Lord?——

To Lady Victoria.——

I'll kiſs you for the happy thought, brother.——

I got up and tenderly bit his cheek.

Have you any objection, Carolina, to an airing in Hyde-park?——

What! *tête à tête* with me, brother?——

Yes, with you alone.——

It will be ſo grave—— let us call *en paſſant* at Lady Preſton's.——

He

He mumbled a No, and ſighed.

My brother ſighs! Prodigious indeed! Am I not miſtaken? Was it a ſigh of love, my Lord, or of diſtreſs?———

Of love, dear Carolina.———

And he ſighed again.

What! ſo far gone, and I knew nothing of it! 'Tis ungenerous, brother.———

I feared thy raillery, ſiſter. I always talked againſt love.———

And you love really?

I do; and thy friend Lady Preſton is the woman.———

Lady Preſton! I'll teaze you with careſſes for the good news.——Now I have a brother. Your indifference made me often

often think you was not ſo.—Does Lady Preſton return your ſighs? Have you told your paſſion?———

I have not.———

So you would have me declare it for you? Would you not, my Lord?———

Tell me, Carolina, has ſhe diſcovered it? She would not, I am ſure, keep the ſecret from thee.———

On my word ſhe has no certainty of your affection.——Your extreme reſerve favours not curioſity. You never had the look of a lover—had you?———

Undoubtedly, Carolina.———

You miſtake, my Lord. I know not how you look when aſleep, but awake, nothing is more cold and inſenſible.——

Lady

Lady Preſton may ſee with other eyes, ſiſter.——

True, my Lord.——But are you in earneſt? Tell me again and again you love her. As this is a miracle, and I believe none, forgive my incredulity.——

Is not my character a ſecurity?——

A man of character, my Lord, will ſometimes banter.——

Well, ſiſter, I love her as much as thou doſt Pelerſton.——

Ha, ha, ha! I thought your mighty love would at laſt dwindle into wit.——

Don't you love Lord Pelerſton?——

Now,

Now I anſwer no, to-morrow I may ſay yes.——

I am ſorry I did not wait till to-morrow to make a confident of thee.——

And he ſmiled.

Tell me without ſimile, or mental reſervation, do you love Lady Preſton?—

I do, ſincerely do.——

Then you are an happy man.——

Happy!——

She loves you, brother.——

Loves me!

And for ten minutes my wife brother was abſolutely mad with joy. — "Loves me!"—And he leaped and whiſked about

to

to the no ſmall terror of my lap-dog and Canary bird. The noiſe of a China baſon, which he elbowed on the floor, at length brought him to his ſenſes.

She loves me, Carolina?——

And he ſat by me.

I'll ſay ſhe does not, unleſs you behave more diſcreetly, and kiſs my lap-dog, who is frightened out of his wits.——

He took him in his arms.

She loves me!——

Yes, ſhe does.——Keep ſtill!—Beggar me not of my china in your fits of joy.——

He

He kiſſed my forehead.

She loves me!——

Let us go to Hyde-park, my Lord.—

Tell me ſhe loves me.——

Hear the dear words from her own lips, and not from mine.——A ſiſter cannot expreſs them to a brother.——Go to her.——

I dare not. If I ſpeak, ſhe will laugh me into ſilence.——

Fear not: go, look, talk, and ſhe will believe you.——She has ſeen you too often to be indifferent.—A man of your merit is too precious a treaſure not to be coveted by a modeſt woman. Go, brother, ſhe will welcome the tender of your heart;

heart: be as bleſſed with the poſſeſſion of her's, and Carolina ſhall be happy.——

Lord Pelham could not help ſhedding a few tears, embracing his dear Carolina, and ſtraining her to his boſom. He took his ring and put it upon my finger ——I took off mine and put it upon his. We ſmiled, ſaluted.——He is gone.

Thou ſhalt hear of their wedding in a few days, for I am certain they will not, like Sir John and thee, delay their happineſs through a miſtaken delicacy. ——A propos of Sir John——he adores thee, deſerves thee—I will tell thee no more.—A card! Lord Fanfly is come, Victoria.

"Lord Fanfly's moſt reſpectful compliments to Lady Carolina Pelham. Is juſt alighted

alighted from France, will do himself the honour to wait upon her to-morrow" —'Psha! I have no patience. The deuce take him for his impertinent civility.

London—176——

LET-

LETTER XVI.

Sir JOHN MODISH to LORD PELHAM.

NEW incidents in life untravel the nature of man better than philoſophy and our correſpondence with all the puppets, male and female, which ſwarm round St. James's.

Who knows his heart, and the innumerable wants of the ſoul, till he meets with the circumſtances deſtined to call forth their latent principle?

Aſk a virtuous maid, whoſe lover, having rouſed every ſenſe, and lulled diſcretion aſleep, has unawares invaded her bloom.

Aſk Lady Belmour how ſhe came into my coach, and from my coach into the Wheat-ſheaf.

Aſk Cornelia how ſhe loved a man ſhe had hardly diſtinguiſhed as a friend, on her huſband pointing him out to her as the object of his jealouſy.

Aſk Fatima, how, after ſhe had nobly reſiſted her lover, and her own deſires, being ſurpriſed in a flutter of ſpirits by a daring beau, ſhe ——— What man, what woman, in every rank of life, would not anſwer you, "Only to circumſtances, my Lord, am I indebted for my foibles or my virtues?"

I love, ſincerely love Victoria, yet I not only delight in my intrigue with Lady Belmour, but am even impatient to begin another.

another.—Whence this thirſt of novelty? Is it from nature or education?—Education! no: this can but explain the ſenſations the former gives.—Nature! I will not argue with thee.—I will honour thee by yielding to the ſenſibility thou haſt endowed me with.

Read this letter, Frederick, and if in thy wiſdom thou telleſt me, I could have reſiſted the temptation—take my anſwer, I have not thy wiſdom.

To Sir JOHN MODISH.

Will the drowſy ſoul of Sir John never awake? Will he ſtill pine for a beauty

who doats on his unworthy rival? What! ſhall Lady Victoria boaſt, that the loveliest of men is the moſt indifferent to her—that ſhe has at her command the idol of her ſex, and diſdains him! In what does the haughty favourite of love at preſent differ from the generality of mankind; ſince, like them, he baſely careſſes the chain that fetters him?——I almoſt hate thee for thy puſillanimity.

Shall the hero, whoſe attacks were ever crowned with ſucceſs, ſink under a firſt defeat, and not repair the diſgrace by gathering new laurels! What is one overthrow to many victories? Was not Apollo denied by Daphne? Imitate the god: reign over a heart more ſenſible of thy parts, more impartial to thy virtues.

When

Awake, Sir John; bluſh for the prepoſterous dreams of thy bewildered ſoul. —A heart, a tender heart, ſhall welcome thy liberty.—Think of the triumph that waits thee, and be free.

When Nature has expreſsly formed for thee a heart whoſe fondneſs is adequate to thy ſenſibility, wilt thou heſitate?

Thinkeſt thou *I* want charms to pleaſe, or virtues to engage; or feareſt thou that thy ſearch for me among ſo many handſome women will prove ineffectual? Ineffectual! Has not Love a mien diſtinct from every other? Who can aſſume his looks, his voice, his ingenuity?

This afternoon I ſhall be at Mrs. Elliſon's with three agreeable ladies.—Never ſay thou haſt loved, if coming thou knoweſt me not.

* * * * * * *

Victoria! Belmour! names dear to my ſoul, ſhall curioſity conquer you? It muſt—it ſhall. Pleaſure lead the way, I follow thee.

Four o'Clock, Afternoon.

Juſt ſix o'clock when I got to Mrs. Elliſon's. It being a ſultry day the ladies had retired to a ſummer-houſe, on the ſide of a large piece of water between the park and the garden. Thither I haſtened with the pace of an uſurer going to meet a ſpendthrift, or of an old maid coming back

back from church with her bridegroom of twenty.

I entered the room.——What a ſight preſented itſelf! —— A woman on a ſofa, the very picture of Pſyche ſlumbering in the abſence of Cupid. I will not draw her poſture, Frederick, leſt my heart ſhould catch the fire of my imagination. It were dangerous to deſcribe her left leg, which, by its ſituation expoſed all the beauties of the right, and invited a wanton eye to a proſpect ſtill more delightful——her boſom ſo luxurioufly reſtleſs——ſtill more dangerous to tell thee of the voluptuouſneſs of her breath.

Attracted by the fair ſleeper, I ſoftly drew near, and almoſt motionleſs, for fear of waking her, gazed, gazed, and gazed

again. I glanced a kiſs on her breaſt, a few kiſſes on her lips.—I muſt fly or I ſhall be impertinent, ſaid I to myſelf, and I immediately retired, but not without often turning my head towards the bewitching ſcene of bliſs.

As I went out through the door which led to the canal, I perceived Miſs Elliſon and two ladies in a grove adjoining to it. Each ſtep created a new ſurpriſe.

Where am I, Miſs Elliſon! exclaimed I. Where have ſo many beauties been hitherto concealed? Is this reality or inchantment, the work of a benevolent genius, who deigns to favour me with the tranſporting view?——

Is it ſo extraordinary, Sir John?——

It is, Madam. I never was before indulged with it.—Who are theſe ladies?——

The Miſs Boltons of Durham; they are on a viſit to Miſs Cranmer.——

Miſs Cranmer!——

You are amazed, Sir John! Do you know Miſs Cranmer?——

Is ſhe not in the ſummer houſe?——

She is.——

I had been told of her charms, Miſs, but juſtice has not been done to them.—

Never beat with indignation at Froſby, ſaid I to my heart; he cannot be guilty.

I had indulged a hope that the lady I had firſt ſeen might be my unknown tempter; but at the name of Miſs Cranmer, I ſucceſſively caſt a glance at the other three, and could not find a more ſenſible difference than an air of concern in the eye of Miſs Elliſon, which ſeemed to tell me, "I fear my heart is thine."

Surely, thought I, Miſs Elliſon is not the anonymous author of the letters I have received, ſince her firſt rendezvous is ſo prepoſterouſly concerted.—A woman deſirous of conquering a heart expoſes it not to ſuperior charms.—At that inſtant Miſs Cranmer entered the grove. On ſeeing her, I ſoftly repeated theſe lines of Voltaire:

Imaginés de Flore la jeuneſſe,
La taille et l'air de la Nimphe des Bois,
Et de Vénus la grace enchantereſſe,
Et de l'Amour le ſéduiſant minois.

Happy

Happy Frosby! sighed I, how lavish has Fortune been to thee! Loved by Victoria, favoured by Cranmer, does not thy soul enjoy more exquisite delights than genius, glory and empire can procure?

Nine o'Clock.

Miss Ellison presenting me to Miss Cranmer, I addressed her with a devotion as fervent as that of the superstitious in France to the holy reliques which crafty priests expose to their veneration. What respect does beauty inspire! —— What ferocity will it not assuage—what insensibility not inflame? Is there in nature an object more moving, more rapturous, than woman — woman! who can give to each organ the same perpetuity of poignant delights, or relieve our hearts

hearts from that languor into which the inſipidity of every other amuſement neceſſarily ſinks them?

I was too complaiſant to the three ſtrangers not to be thought guilty of partiality by Miſs Elliſon.

What would not Lady Victoria fear, Sir John, from your admiration of theſe ladies?——

As her ladyſhip, Madam, is neither concerned in my ſenſations, nor infatuated with her own beauty——

You think not ſurely that Victoria is to be compared to Miſs Cranmer or her friends.——

I do, Miſs.——

Strange on my word!——

Stranger

Stranger ſtill, were I not to give her the preference.

Are you in earneſt?—

I am.—

How confident a lover!———

How unjuſt a rival!—Diſgrace not thy pretty face, Elliſon, by unſeaſonable ſpite —thy love is no longer a ſecret to me.——

This was not ſpoke, Frederick: it was only thought by me, and gueſſed by Miſs Elliſon, who, bluſhing, turned on her heel, joined the company, and preſided at the tea-table.

Miſs Elliſon, however agreeable, intereſting neither my heart nor my imagination, I reſolved to take no further notice of her paſſion, and from that minute was

was polite, gallant, but inſenſible. She was vexed: I ſaw it: what could I do? Had ſhe gained as much as ſhe loſt by the choice ſhe had imprudently made of her company, my adorations would poſſibly have been addreſſed to her; but as it was, ſhe hardly affected my ſenſes —— and theſe I never gratify but when they are fairly intoxicated.

I diſpenſe with thee, Frederick, from commending my moderation, ſince it is the effect of my indifference. I boaſt not of thoſe actions which proceed more from temper than reaſon, and will ever laugh at the pretended virtue of men, whoſe ſouls, dead to paſſion, are alike incapable of wiſdom or folly.

Eleven

Eleven o'Clock.

Miſs Cranmer has the eye of pleaſure, the gait of deſire. She ſmiles to ſeduce, and talks to inflame. The eaſe of her motions has a charm the feeling only can enjoy. Each limb is formed for tranſport — the ſymmetry of her ſhape is as perfect as that of Victoria, nor does ſhe yield to her in the tempting littleneſs of her foot.——In this they are alike, in every other reſpect abſolutely the reverſe. Miſs Cranmer calls for wanton loves, Victoria diſcards them.—— Had Cranmer the vivacity of Belmour, and this the languor of the former, you might grope in the dark for one of them, be deceived, yet inſenſible of the miſtake. Your hands and lips would ſay in their language, theſe are the charms of Belmour

though

though Cranmer's—thoſe of Cranmer the Belmour's.

The Miſs Boltons ſpoke little, but was I therefore to hold them ſtupid? I know 'tis the faſhion to conſider modeſty and wit as incompatible, but I like to reaſon now and then, and renounce the opinions of the people of *bon-ton*.

Miſs Elliſon thought proper to aſſure me that "though the girls looked like fools, they wanted not underſtanding."

This was an attack on my judgment and revengefully expreſſed. I felt it.

'Tis true, added ſhe, with an air of ſuperiority, they have not been brought up in the polite world, and even bluſh not at a *double entendre*, but ——

I ſeized the opportunity.

Your invective, Miſs, is their encomium. A bluſh betrays the knowledge of what is wrong, and is often the conſciouſneſs of a fault. The ſerenity of their countenance proves the innocence of their hearts. As to their ignorance of the modern accompliſhments, it is an advantage, ſince good ſenſe, virtue, and ingenuity are undoubtedly preferable to precarious charms, and better calculated to make them loved, reſpected and happy.

Well, I proteſt ſuch fine ſentiments from the lips of Sir John Modiſh are a novelty to me. —— Lud! what an oddity! what a metamorphoſis! —— a beau turned preacher! ha! ha! ha! ——

And ſhe flung from me with all the airs of contempt ſhe could aſſume.

My

My blood ran high——ſhe looked them more tempting, Frederick —— I'll be revenged, exclaimed I.——I was going to ſwear it, when an unexpected event threw us into confuſion, and diverted her from my thoughts.

One o'Clock.

Miſs Cranmer and her two friends had ſtepped into a ſhady walk whilſt I converſed with Miſs Elliſon. We had been parted but a few minutes when the youngeſt Miſs Bolton came, in a hurry, to tell her that Miſs Cranmer had fainted in the arms of her ſiſter. I flew to them, and turning an alley perceived, at ſome diſtance, Mrs. Brenton, Lady Victoria, and Froſby.

Un-

Unlucky meeting! exclaimed Miſs Ellifon.

Froſby, who had diſcovered the condition Miſs Cranmer was in, was mending his pace towards us, when Miſs Ellifon, viſibly perplexed, deſired the ladies to help their friend to the ſummer-houſe, while ſhe went to receive the company, and prevent their approach.

The Miſs Boltons being unable to ſupport her, I took her in my arms, and carried her to the ſofa.

Leaving her to the care of her friends, I hurried to the canal for ſome water, filled both my hands with it, and ſprinkling it on my lovely charge, ſoon reſtored her to her bloom.

Fearing

Fearing my preſence might be troubleſome when no longer neceſſary, I was ſtealing to the door.

Pray ſtop, Sir John.———

And ſhe tendered me her hand.

Conſcious by what I knew, by what I had ſeen, of the topick ſhe would fall upon, I heſitated to comply.

You will not ſtay?———

Too plaintive was the tone of her voice, too moving the tear ſhe ſhed——I had not the heart to refuſe. I approached, bowed, and kiſſed her hand.

Permit me, dear ladies, to ſpeak a word to Sir John.———

They retired to a window. Then ſitting on a chair by her ſide———

What

What has the charming Miſs Cranmer to tell me?———

Sir John, may I intruſt a ſecret to your honour?——Will you engage to anſwer a queſtion with ſincerity, however painful for me to know?

Your ſecret, Miſs, ſhall inviolably remain in my breaſt.——But why intruſt it with a man who has it not in his power to ſerve you?———

You have, Sir John——you have indeed.———

Will not Miſs Elliſon better than I.—

She ſtarted up.

Talk not of Elliſon—— ſhe has undone me. ——Shall I expect relief from the cauſe

cauſe of my misfortunes? No. ——From your humanity will I receive it.——

She ſobbed, and was unable to ſpeak.

Her diſtreſs affected me.——So young, ſo lovely, yet a prey to ſorrow! It went to my heart.——She ſaw her own anxiety in my eyes.

You feel for me—how generous!——

I took her hand, reſted my head upon it, ſilent——fearing to hear——

Your concern is happineſs——you will reſolve my doubts——I ſee you will——

I dare not.——

You dare not!——have you already underſtood me?—that word has doomed me to wretchedneſs—"You dare not!" 'tis death——you knew my fate——

The

The "dare not" Frederick, had been involuntary: it eſcaped from my ſoul which ſhared in all her deſpondency.

How ſhould I, Miſs?———

I reddened as I ſpoke.

You have not underſtood me! why then not dare to tell me the truth?——— Diſguiſe it not, Sir John——— be as honeſt as that bluſh you could not ſuppreſs—it tells me I am miſerable———

She grew pale, faint—I ſupported her. O Froſby! Froſby! exclaimed I.

She opened her eyes—and caſting a wild look at me———

Froſby!—what of him?——— Sir John! your pity kills me—your grief is more expreſſive than words—I ſee I have loſt the heart of Froſby.———

You

You have not.—He ſtill loves, can love, but you.———

She looked for truth in my countenance.

Your tongue agrees not with your features—theſe cannot deceive me.—Judge of my agony by theſe throbs.———

And ſhe ſtrained my hand to her heart.

I ſhall not outlive the ſhame of my credulity—life would be a torment———

Be compoſed.———

Compoſed!—Oh, Sir John! I have juſt ſeen them like lovers—hand in hand—arm in arm—my heart failed me—Do you love Lady Victoria?——

I do.——

Are you loved by her?——

I am not.—

Then Frosby—you have said enough—— my misery is compleat.—Perfidious wretch!—

She fell lifeless into my arms.

Three o'Clock.

Unable any longer to endure her distress which I could not, without deceit, alleviate, I withdrew from the salloon as Miss Ellison entered it.

Vexation could easily be traced on her features. Casting a look on Miss Cranmer who was just then coming to herself—

The heat has been so great, ladies, that it is no wonder a delicate constitution

ſhould ſink under it—I am myſelf almoſt overpowered by it. —You will find Lady Victoria, Sir John, near the ſtatue of Minerva.—And ſhe curteſied "be gone, wretch!"

I was not to be duped by her ſeeming ingenuity. Her exclamation at the ſight of Lady Victoria, her trouble at the uncommon eagerneſs of Froſby, her attention to prevent their appearance amongſt us, convinced me ſhe was the confident of their amour, and had ſome particular intereſt to ſerve by concealing it from her ladyſhip.

I have often heard her commend Froſby, and attempt to make his good qualities conſpicuous to Lady Victoria.—How could ſhe, with honour, reconcile her praiſes with the knowledge of his perfidy?

fidy? Is ſhe not as guilty as the man whoſe deſigns upon the two unſuſpecting ladies ſhe ſecretly favours? She is at once a friend to Cranmer and Victoria, and both are unacquainted with the dangers that threaten them!

Is it probable that Miſs Elliſon ſhould be indifferent to Miſs Cranmer's diſgrace by the infidelity of Froſby if ſhe thought it real?—Is it not ſtill leſs probable that Froſby ſhould forſake a woman whoſe love, fortune, and accompliſhments are undoubtedly adequate to his moſt ſanguine expectations.—Whence then can the ſilence of Miſs Elliſon, and the inconſtancy of Froſby proceed?——

She loves me— has not my certainty of Victoria's attachment to Froſby, by ſilencing my paſſion, given Miſs Elliſon to

hope I would devote myſelf to her?—In this caſe his diſſimulation — but would, Froſby conſpire with her, feign an inclination he is a ſtranger to, and wantonly play with the happineſs of Lady Victoria? Could his hatred be more fatal to her? — It muſt be Elliſon who betrayed Miſs Cranmer when bathing — Did Froſby reſign to her his honour in exchange for the opportunity? Was his aſſiduity to Victoria the reward ſhe inſiſted on?—No: neither of them can have ſo far deviated from virtue and humanity—What then is the cauſe of his guilty behaviour —of her guilty ſilence? —I will unravel the myſtery. — Too long have I been withheld by a miſtaken delicacy — I will know the guilty, and ſave the innocent from deſtruction.

Such

Such, Frederick, were my reflections in my way to the ladies.

Six o'Clock.

To obſerve, unperceived, the countenance of Froſby, I ſtole ſoftly behind the trees, which ſurrounded the ſtatue of Minerva, and removing a few leaves had a full view of them all.

They ſat on different beds of turf.

Lady Victoria had her eyes caſt down, and was careſſing a ſpaniel with one hand, whilſt her head reclined on the other.—Now and then her boſom heaved, and a ſigh could be gueſſed from the involuntary diſcloſing of her lips.

Froſby looked apparently on the ſhield of Minerva, but in reality towards the opening of an oppoſite walk, as if in expectation of ſome intereſting diſcovery. Once he naturally moved forward, and as naturally ſtepped back. Every motion betrayed an uneaſy ſoul. Twice at a glance of Victoria, his colour roſe and fell—he attempted to ſpeak and could not find words.

Mrs. Brenton's phyſiognomy was too full of life to know exactly what ſenſation affected her moſt.—They crowded on her features with ſuch rapidity as to defy my diſcernment. One notified her doubts of Froſby's honour—another her eſteem for him.—She felt every paſſion, expreſſed each, and favoured none.

I quitted my hiding place, and taking a by-path, got into the alley which led directly to them.

At the noiſe I made, they all ſtarted.—quick, very quick, was the change of their countenances. Curioſity diſplayed itſelf in the movements of Mrs. Brenton, whilſt my preſence ſeemed to heighten the confuſion of Froſby, and awake a concern in the breaſt of Victoria.

For the firſt time, Frederick, I lovingly took her hand, and preſſed it to my lips. She was ſurprized, but withdrew it not. Her looks emboldened me: I ſat down on the ſame bed of turf.

Is Miſs Cranmer recovered, Sir John?——

She is, my Lady.——But her heart—'tis in her heart the diſorder lies. She bewails the loſs of an ingrate ſhe loves.—

At theſe words her hand ſhook —— ſhe coloured, and looked at Froſby.

Curſe on my indiſcretion!

And I roſe up. —— A ſmile telling me I might have miſtaken, I ſat down again.

Poor Miſs Cranmer! ——

Your ſoul, my Lady, would have melted with the expreſſion of her ſorrow.—— Her youth, her beauty ——

Who is the wretch who makes her unhappy? Are you acquainted with him, Mr. Froſby? Whence your perplexity? Why ſo diſturbed?——Your heart bleeds for

for the unfortunate Miſs Cranmer—— perhaps for a friend whoſe inconſtancy you cannot juſtify——

For both, my Lady.——

And he ſhed a tear.

Your concern is very commendable —— that tear is generous—— you have an excellent heart, Mr. Froſby.——

The tear, Frederick, confirmed my ſuſpicion. He loves, and loves but Cranmer, ſaid I to myſelf.——Indifference knows not the charm of ſhedding a tear.——The tranquility of Lady Victoria kindled ideas I durſt not before entertain——it diffuſed ſuch rays of light on her behaviour to me that I was almoſt aſhamed not to have underſtood it ſooner.——It was evident Froſby was not

the man ſhe loved —— What a ſtupid fellow have I been!" exclaimed I.

The meaning of this was in my looks, and my ſqueeze of her hand.

What a variety of forms you have at command, Sir John! You came to us with an air of the utmoſt deſpondency, and now———

Mind not her words, Frederick. While ſhe talked, a ſudden throb of her boſom, which her handkerchief could not conceal, and her eyes, fixed on mine, told me, "I am glad you are no longer that ſtupid fellow."

The ſcene changed as I ſaw you, my Lady. Sadneſs vaniſhes at the ſight of beauty: pleaſure is the only ſenſation we feel near you.———

Ever

Ever polite and flattering.——

No, never.——

What then?——

Sincere and loving.——

Sir John!——

And, on my honour, Frederick, ſhe ſmiled upon me.

She pauſed, then turned to Mrs. Brenton, then to Froſby——then ——

Don't you compliment me, Madam, on the declaration I have juſt been honoured with? —— Will not you, Mr. Froſby, do Sir John or me the favour of a jealous fit?——Shall your concern for Miſs Cranmer totally deprive me of your attention?——

My

My Lady, little do I know how to diſſemble.——

Diſſemble, Sir!——

She haſtily aroſe and ſtepping to him———

Explain the myſterious words.—

He ſighed, and turned his head from her.

She took his hand.

Why ſo dejected? Is Miſs Cranmer or I the cauſe of it? — I am Victoria—— your friend —— I cannot bear to ſee you unhappy.———

Heavenly girl! your goodneſs confounds me——I deſerve it not ——believe me, I deſerve it not.—

What do I hear?—Oh! dear aunt.—

She

She ſobbed and went to Mrs. Brenton.

Confuſion! thought I, on ſeeing her cheeks bedewed with tears.—How many damned blunders do I commit! —She loves him—'tis plain. Curſe upon love, which thus ridiculouſly deludes me!

What is your crime? reſumed Lady Victoria. What have you done?—You have not forfeited your honour?——Forgive the queſtion—'tis an inſult to us both, —No: I will not think of it.——You are worthy of my eſteem, though you had no claim to my love.———

Frederick! this was the language of indifference.—I began to breathe.

What generoſity!—and I could offend! ——Oh, Victoria! you render me contemptible in my own eyes:——your good opinion

opinion ſinks me into a hatred of myſelf. —'Tis intolerable.——

Froſby. —— You are ſtill my friend —are you not?——You never injured me.——Had you ever a wiſh that was not for my happineſs?——

Deſtructive paſſions, how you ſport with a ſenſible heart?—What virtue can long reſiſt you?——You loved me not, Victoria.——

How he delighted my ear, Frederick!

You loved me not—I have not that remorſe to torture me.——What a triumph for you, Sir John!——

Lady Victoria leaned her head on the boſom of Mrs. Brenton.

Triumph,

Triumph, Sir! No: I will not exult at the errors of others. A rational man is always indulgent: he knows the power of the paſſions, and how difficult it is to oppoſe them. Your repentance is far more glorious than your fault was blameable.—The man who never failed is not half ſo praiſe-worthy as he who has the magnanimity to confeſs he did.—If there is any other cauſe for my triumph, pray conceal it not.———

Froſby!———

Too injured Victoria!———

And he kneeled before her.

Injured!—In what? Tell me of an injuſtice—I can ſuſpect none from you.—

Miſs

Miſs Cranmer — an oath—a dreadful oath—no—I cannot ſpeak.—

And he flew away from us.

Eight o'Clock.

The ſudden departure of Froſby ſtruck Lady Victoria with amazement. She ſilently followed him with her eyes till he was out of ſight; then abſolutely forgot I was preſent.

O man, man! exclaimed ſhe. How imprudent to truſt thee!———.

And ſhe walked, abſorbed in thought, to the ſeat he had left.

He loved Miſs Cranmer, yet every day talked of love to me!—Froſby could deceive!———

Mrs.

Mrs. Brenton, roufed by her doleful accents, ftepped to her. I refpected her grief, and remained where I was.

Dear aunt, Frofby was a perjurer.—— Since his heart was Mifs Cranmer's, why did he continue to tell me of his paffion? 'Twas ungenerous.—One of us he bafely betrayed.—This behaviour from Frofby! —A heart I thought untainted with the vices of the age———

She put her handkerchief to her eye.

My foul was in a dreadful agitation, Frederick.

An oath!—What can he have fworn? —To pretend an inclination he had not? ——Mifs Cranmer could not command this—her heart had rebelled againft fuch

an

an order.—Whom elſe had he to obey?—Would we could juſtify him! For though I—loved not, 'tis torment to deſpiſe the man we eſteemed.———

The "loved not" was mumbled, but I heard it.

Mrs. Brenton whiſpered her, and after exchanging a few words, Victoria ſeemed in ſome meaſure to reſume her uſual ſerenity.

Their looks inviting me, I aroſe and joined them.

Who, my Lady, would not glory in poſſeſſing a heart ſo feeling and virtuous?—Froſby never knew its worth.———

She ſtifled a ſigh.

Did

Did he not ſay you loved him not, and appear glad it was ſo?———

He did.———

She turned her head, and threw her arm round the neck of Mrs. Brenton.

You love him not?———

He ſaid ſo.———

And you do not?———

You are too gay for being my confident.———

Oh! tell me, my Lady, tell me you love not Froſby.———

Are you ſo much Froſby's friend as to delight in my indifference for him?——— If ſo, tell him I love him not, that he may

may not be unhappy through the fear I do.———

You love him not! Is it poſſible! How grateful to my heart the aſſurance you give!—You love him not!———

'Tis not for Froſby but for yourſelf I welcome the pleaſing news with the moſt ſenſible joy.——Thrice happy the day in which I am told you love not Froſby! What misfortunes, dear my Lady, have you not avoided! How I dreaded for the peace of your life! How could you have endured the infidelity of the man you loved? Miſs Cranmer he adores.—'Tis long ſince I knew the fatal ſecret.—Never would I have revealed it, leſt you ſhould have been overcome by deſpair, if chance or Froſby had not brought it to light.—If I kept it from you, my Lady, conſider, I thought you loved him.—Pity my deli-

cacy &

cacy: I would have died an hundred deaths rather than accuſe Froſby.———

How aſtoniſhed Mrs. Brenton! How affected Lady Victoria!

You have added to my regard for you, ſaid the former, though indeed, Sir John, I thought that impoſſible.———

I kiſſed her hand.

The latter ſpoke not, but how expreſſive and grateful were her looks!

I fell at her feet.

Frederick! how virtuous would men be were the eſteem of a beautiful and worthy woman the prize!

I had juſt fallen on my knee when Miſs Elliſon ſurpriſed me in the delightful poſture.

Eleven o'Clock.

Am I awake? Sir John at your feet, my Lady! —— This, Frederick, her countenance clearly expreſſed.

What's the matter with Mr. Froſby, Victoria? He came to us ſo ſtrangely agitated he would not ſtop one minute, but went immediately off with Miſs Cranmer and her friends.——

Has he not told you, Miſs, of his extreme concern for Miſs Cranmer?——

Not he indeed. What concern can he have with that lady?——

That

Mutual love, Madam. He could not diſſemble: her accident almoſt betrayed him into a confeſſion of his paſſion for her.—

His paſſion for her! Mutual love!—Immenſely fine this on my honour! Ha! ha! ha!——Do you jeſt, my Lady?——

I do not.———

And ſhe related moſt of what had paſſed.

A charming ſcene, Victoria! I am vexed I was not preſent. Did he act well?———

To the very life, ſaid I, with a ſneer.---

I don't doubt it. Next to you, Sir John, he is the beſt mimic I ever knew. ---But you was acting when I came.——Is it the ſecond act? Since I loſt the firſt, pray go on, let me not loſe this. Come,

my

my Lady, you was there, and you, Sir, here——on your knee.——You won't oblige me? How unkind!——

Is not my ſilence the greateſt condeſcenſion I can ſhew you, Miſs?——

How ſevere, Sir John! ſaid Lady Victoria, wondering at my expreſſion. Miſs Elliſon laughed.

Lord! what dignity in your language, when I only require the futility of a buffoon? Ha! ha! ha! are you afraid of being eclipſed by Froſby, that you dare not to perform after him? Take courage, Sir John: we ſhall certainly applaud you.——

Are you as certain, Miſs, not to ſuffer by my performance?——

I am, Sir: but as you are ſo averſe to afford us that pleaſure I will entreat you no longer. Be aſſured, my Lady, that Mr. Froſby has a very ſlight knowledge of Miſs Cranmer —— that he imitates not the beaus of the age in their tranſitory amours —— that his heart is wholly yours.——Is it probable that a man of his underſtanding would have ſo fooliſhly talked himſelf into diſgrace? From his careleſſneſs you may infer he is innocent. Were he a man of faſhionable life, indeed he might love, change, and boaſt of it: but he is not a Duke or a Sir John Modiſh. — That frown is unſeaſonable, Sir, you would be diſpleaſed not to deſerve this eulogium.——

Your ſarcaſms are too ſprightly, Miſs, not to be forgiven. But if I admire your

wit, I am ſorry I cannot pay the ſame compliment to your ſincerity. ——

Perhaps Sir John has faith in thoſe things only his ſelf-love is intereſted to believe.— Had you leſs partiality, Sir, you would think me more credible. —

And ſhe ſpoke with ſuch an air of ingenuity and indifference about Cranmer and Froſby, that had I not been convinced of their amour, I ſhould have been a dupe to her apparent candour.

The impoſture was ſo artfully ſupported by her natural elocution that I caught in the looks of Mrs. Brenton a deſire to credit her, blended with a temptation not to miſtruſt my word.

We

We muſt own, ſaid Lady Victoria ſmiling, that Mr. Froſby could not have a more ſkilful apologiſt for the flights of his good nature: but I really doubt, Miſs, whether he will thank you for the attempt. Too genuine were his ſorrow and repentance, too deciſive the words he uttered, too unaffected the tears he ſhed. 'Twas no farce, Miſs: Art, however ingenious, has not the flexibility of Nature. May not Mr. Froſby have ſecrets unknown to you?—

He may have hundreds for aught I know, but this could be no ſecret. Miſs Cranmer's friendſhip for me, and Mr. Froſby's public homage to you, prove unanſwerably the impoſſibility of an intrigue between them, and of it being hidden from me. The accuſation is abſurd.

Two in the Morning.

Are you not aſtoniſhed, Frederick, at the unſhaken confidence of Miſs Elliſon, and the dexterity with which ſhe interpreted the behaviour of Froſby? At what political ſchool has ſhe attained ſo unſpeakable a maſtery over herſelf?

How naturally ſhe ſhewed a diſlike to me, to give my oppoſition an air of revenge! how daringly ſhe provoked my anger, and defended Froſby!

This is a new plot, ſaid I to myſelf, juſt laid to invalidate the imprudent declarations of Froſby; and ſo far has it already ſucceeded as to raiſe a doubt in his favour, ſkreen her from being thought acceſſory to his guilt, and render my evi-

dence

dence equivocal.—Had Froſby her head, or could he, with a native hypocriſy, act the part ſhe ſhall allot him, it would be difficult to convict them. Thanks to fortune I have not to work on a prejudiced mind. Lady Victoria loves not Froſby, her reaſon is at full liberty to judge—I ſhall conquer.

The night coming on, Mrs. Brenton took her leave. Miſs Elliſon inſiſting on ſeeing them to their coach, we all walked to the houſe.

I will remove your doubts, whiſpered I to Lady Victoria.

Needleſs, Sir John, ſince I love not Mr. Froſby.——

She

She loves him not! Partake in my joy, Frederick, partake in my joy! She loves him not! Doſt thou conceive all the charm of theſe words? Inſenſible creature, ſhalt thou never meet with a Victoria? Pray for that happineſs—fervently pray—think of no other prayer, Frederick—If ſucceſsful, no longer ſhalt thou have a wiſh to form.

Modiſh-hall, —176—

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

ERRATA. VOL. I.

Page 18. line 18. *as well as*, read *no more than*

Page 104. line 7. *paſſionated* read *paſſionate*

Page 107. line 16. dele *to be*

Page 147. line 18. *paſſionate* read *compaſſionate*

Page 157. line 4. *conſider* read *deſire*.

The Reader will be pleaſed to rectify a few other errors of the Preſs, occaſioned by the abſence of the Editor.